

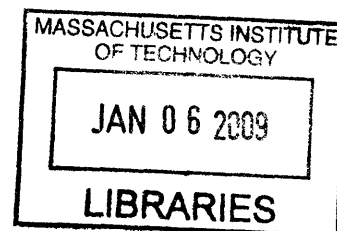
HERO REPORTS

MAPPING CIVIC COURAGE

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Submitted to the Program in Media Arts and Sciences
School of Architecture and Planning
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ARCHIVES

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ABSTRACT

Hero Reports extends the rationale of New York City's "See Something, Say Something" campaign—an alert public can be a good security measure. The current political climate within the United States translates the MTA's tactics into ones of fear. Instead of fostering collective security, these calls for vigilance create rifts between people and communities. An unhealthy impact of the "See Something, Say Something" campaign encourages people to look at each other with heightened and prejudicial suspicion.

Although other projects have sought to interrogate the tactics of such citizen-detective campaigns, they do not provide productive alternatives. Because of this, projects seeking to deflect fear, only serve to reify and preserve its power. An alternative technology is needed to effectively destabilize the message of fear inherent in the MTA campaign. Hero Reports counterbalances the vigilance associated with suspicion and Othering with measures of positive and contextual alertness. It is a technology that builds communities that are truly, and collectively, empowering.

Hero Reports provides this alternative first by aggregating stories of everyday heroism, and then by thematically, geographically and temporally mapping them. By linking and contextualizing discrete moments of heroism, Hero Reports promotes a public discourse about how we create, enforce and value social norms. Balancing the empirical ways we measure crime, Hero Reports provides the groundwork for determining the empirical parameters for heroism.

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HERO REPORTS

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

According to an AP-Ipsos poll conducted in February 2007, Americans greatly underestimate the number of Iraqi civilians killed in the current war. While the U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq reported more than 34,000 deaths in 2006 alone, and a contemporaneous John Hopkins study estimated more than 650,000 civilian casualties between March 2003 and July 2006 (Burnham 2006), the median estimate by Americans is 9,890 (Benac 2007). Margot Norris (1994) explains the discrepancy between public perception and body count data as the result of de facto practices by the Pentagon. By restricting press access to the suffering, the government systematically obscures public knowledge, which in turn blocks affect, empathy, and protest. The moral and political defeat in Vietnam helped usher in the illusion that human loss is irrelevant to military success.

Cherry Blossoms addresses the disparity between human suffering and perception of that suffering. The project starts in a backpack outfitted with a small micro controller and a GPS unit. Recent news of bombings in Iraq are downloaded to the unit, and their locations, relative to the center of the city, are superimposed on a map of Boston. If the wearer walks into a space in Boston that correlates to a site of violence in Baghdad, the backpack detonates and releases a compressed air cloud of confetti. Looking like a mixture of smoke, shrapnel and the white blossoms of a cherry tree, the explosion completely engulfs the wearer. Each piece of confetti is inscribed with the name of a civilian who died in the war, and the circumstances of his or her death.

With *Cherry Blossoms*, I sought a dialog about human loss beyond the boundary of conflict. With *Cherry Blossoms*, I walked the streets with a backpack that looked like a weapon. And no one said a word.

People watched. I got my fair share of cocked heads and double takes. I was still visible. I was still provoking social norms. So perhaps eventually, I would have found the rift I was flirting with. If I had demanded it. Perhaps eventually, there would have been dialog. If I had started talking. But in the end I was a white woman, sometimes in a skirt, sometimes with a camera, always in makeup. In the end, I was just as hesitant to talk to them, as they were to talk to me. In the end, I neither posed a threat nor built a bridge.

This walk of visibility, silence and threat lead me toward questions of our public passings. The meaning of our everyday in-between spaces. We watch each other, but how do we really see? We talk, but what are we really saying?

I sense fear behind these answers—fear of our differences, fear of making a difference. In consequence, we stand paralyzed and alone. I wonder why then technologies don't help? We live in the same time, we move in the same space. We share a humanity yet still write our own story. Why do we build tools that define and defend my world *against* yours? Where are the technologies that do not let me forget you as they remind me of Us? I refer to technologies that respond to these questions, as “technologies of empathy.”

These technologies create a cultural *process* of dual-perspective. In line with general definitions of empathy, the first perspective of such technologies allows one to see from another's point of view. The second perspective of the technologies of empathy is the kicker; see yourself being seen from another person's point of view. In other words, to see Self as a manifestation of Other. Both are connected, both are the same. This second perspective of empathy mobilizes cognitive and physiological response into action. What we see-perspective-translates into what we say-action (Hunt 2007).

We are well-versed and well-trained to access the first perspective. From Optimus Primus in the Transformers to the children of Darfur, we possess the flexibility of mind to identify with many different perspectives. The second perspective, however, poses the key challenge for any technology of empathy. Technologies typically maintain and protect distance instead of maintaining and protecting our shared humanity. Consequently, we might be able to put ourselves in the shoes of another, but we cannot put ourselves as the object of another. Without this second perspective, one cannot find the moral compass to guide action (Smith 1790).

While different in form, both *Cherry Blossoms* and *Hero Reports* aspire to be a technology of empathy. *Cherry Blossoms* addressed our connections with the human costs of war. In contrast, *Hero Reports* tackles what I consider a harder problem-the isolation of the ordinary moment. By re-framing our everyday routine, perhaps we can reveal the cultural necessity of a shared humanity. Perhaps through everyday technology we can see ourselves as the reflection of the Other, and make civic decisions for ourselves as that reflection. *Hero Reports* supports seeing the ordinary as possibility for connection. In its creation, I have uncovered as many questions as answers. These questions make the following document not the end of a project but, rather, a beginning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hero has no easy definition. Among other dynamics, the word ‘hero’ touches upon myths of power, fantasies of escape and fears of dying. In the War on Terror, ‘hero’ often embodies men, trained to serve and protect us—the firefighter of 9/11, the soldier in Iraq. Yet, even in non-war contexts, the courage and nobility of ‘hero’ still signify the drama of life and death. The super man flies in to save the damsel in distress. The teacher dedicates a life to leave the indelible mark.

While we may not be able to pin down hero’s essence, we can identify its process of creation. Heroes are an integral part of our shared cultural story. In fact, there would be no hero without the story. Through the passing of such stories, we have come to acknowledge and reify a certain practice of heroism that centers on a trope of sacrifice. Our government honors those whose job or morality compels the heroic. Our news and entertainment honor the hero with warming moments of celebration.

From a perspective of individual sacrifice, the story of heroism is well worn. But Hero Reports begins with a different story of heroism—the every day, every moment possibility of making a difference. This is not a story of sacrifice, although the heroism can still be still life saving. Rather, Hero Reports weighs the heroic act as equal contribution to self and city. Through the aggregation and mapping of these acts, the discrete moment collects a cultural memory and economic consequence. This story of Heroism offers another vision and vocabulary for our selves and our cities.

1.1 ROAD MAP FOR THESIS

The way we understand hero and the way we evaluate urban well being influences our agency in civic discourse . Hero Reports argues that technological tools can not only can reveal the dynamic relations of hero, security and city, but-through specific collection and visualization-can shift these relations away from one of fear toward one of possibility. In working towards this thesis, the following document is organized into five parts:

Chapter 1 *Background* presents a theoretical framework for Hero Reports, with a discussion of terror, security and hero specific to New York City.

Similarly, Chapter 2 *Related Research* describes an applied framework through a review of current work in cooperation, civic media and artistic intervention . Combined, these chapters outline the cultural context that guides the approach of Hero Reports.

Informed by theoretical and applied context, Hero Reports take on three areas of production—a technology for collecting, a design for mapping, and a community for meaning.

Chapter 3 *Implementation* outlines the technology and design of Hero Reports.

Chapter 4 *Discussion* looks at the nature of the stories and communities who made meaning. We conclude with the

challenges and possibilities of sustained growth .

Hero Reports attempts to map heroism for economic and cultural weight. In its creation, Hero Reports posits a shift of perspective, a shift with much hope and even more questions.

2. BACKGROUND

Hero Reports responds to a current matrix of terror, city and activism. The following sections outline relevant theoretical work. “Ways of Seeing” covers counter-terrorism initiatives and corresponding effects of suspicion. The section “Ways of Moving” investigates the everyday circulations and visualizations of a city’s safety in these times of terror. And “The Aesthetics of Hero” looks at the imaging technologies of the war narrative. From this context, particular cultural practices materialize-ways of seeing and moving that rest at the heart of Hero Reports.

2.1 WAYS OF SEEING

In times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in the position of having to play detective.”

-Walter Benjamin 1938

2.1.1 THE CITIZEN-DETECTIVE

In March 2003, the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) reissued a 1993 New York security campaign—“If You See Something, Say Something” (Figures 1). Posted in English and Spanish, aired on TV and radio, printed on Metrocards¹ and Metrocard vending machines, and regularly repeated on transit announcement systems, the campaign instructed New Yorkers to report everyday sightings of suspicious activity. The urging goes “If you see a suspicious package or activity on the bus, platform or train, don’t keep it to yourself. Tell a police officer or an MTA employee. Or call the toll-free Terrorism Hotline at 1-888-NYC-SAFE.”

According to MTA Deputy Executive Director/Director of Security William A. Morange, the assistance of passengers is critically important in maintaining security. He says, “It is impossible for the police departments to be everywhere and see everything. Our passengers extend our reach and - by sharing their information—make the system safer.” The Federally trademarked slogan, “If You See Something, Say Something,” along with the corresponding instructions for the reporting of an “unattended package or suspicious activity,” has brand identity. As Morange notes, “Dozens of municipalities in this country and around the world”

¹ The Metrocard is the current payment method for the New York City Subway (rapid transit) system, buses in the New York City Transit (including routes operated by Atlantic Express under contract to the MTA), MTA Bus, and Long Island Bus systems, the PATH subway system, the Roosevelt Island Tram, AirTrain JFK and Westchester County’s Bee-Line Bus System. It is a thin, plastic card on which the customer electronically loads fares. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrocard>

**IF YOU SEE
SOMETHING,
SAY
SOMETHING.**

2-1 2002–2003 MTA Security Campaign
Subway Version: “See Something, Say
Something”

**iSI VES
ALGO,
DI ALGO!**

2-2 2002–2003 MTA Security Campaign
Subway Version: “See Something, Say
Something” Premium Square - Spanish

Subject to applicable tariffs and conditions of use

EXPIRES 11/30/06
1221761024 12363041

For Customer Service call 212-636-7882 or/see NYC 1-800-METROCARD T0508

**IF YOU SEE SOMETHING,
SAY SOMETHING**

If you see a suspicious package or activity on the bus,
platform or train. Don't keep it to yourself.
Tell a police officer or an MTA employee.
Or call the toll-free Terrorism Hotline at
1-888-NYC-SAFE (1-888-692-7233)

2-3 2002–2003 MTA Security Campaign
Metrocard Version. “See Something, Say
Something”

are requesting to use it (Metropolitan Transit Authority 2003).

This first generation of ads was followed by specific reminders to pay attention to such objects as unattended packages or luggage (Figure 7). In 2004, a third generation of ads featured a bomb-removal robot about to lift a suspicious package with one of two headlines: “Please Take Your Things. Or We Will” or “Did Anybody Find a Black Briefcase?” (Figure 8). As stated in the press release, “This graphic illustration of the consequences of leaving a package unattended was created to remind riders that they need to remain vigilant about their own packages as well as suspicious objects left by others.”

As a means of thanks and encouragement to remain vigilant, the MTA released the 2005 series, “The Good Call” (Figure 8). Katherine N. Knapp, Executive Director of the MTA, explained the rationale: “We want to reinforce among our customers how important it is that they continue to be aware of their surroundings and to report suspicious activity or packages. As events in Madrid, London, and other cities have demonstrated, the threat of terrorism remains very real, and we need to remind ourselves not to become complacent.”

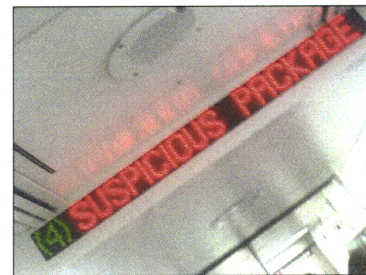
As depicted in Figures 11 and 12, each year to date has seen a new series of the “See Something, Say Something” campaign, while previous messages remain on distribution posts throughout the city. The campaign’s pervasive presence speaks to the priorities of the city’s anti-terrorism strategy. By identifying threat, the public plays a vital role in keeping the city safe.

But what do New Yorkers identify as threatening? Unlike other reports issued to the city, anti-terrorism reports are private data; however, the 2006 series, “Last Year, 1,944 New Yorkers Saw Something and Said Something,” (Figure 11) led many to ask for specifics. In a 2008 article for *The New York Times*, William Neuman gives us the only publicly available response to a collective question: “What, exactly, did those 1,944 New Yorkers see, and what did they say?”

According to Neuman, no active terror plots were thwarted, or at least none “that would have been announced by the authorities.” The anti-terrorism hot line, 1-888-NYC-SAFE, received 8,999 calls in 2006, with a significant number about suspicious packages. None were bombs.



2-4 2002–2003 MTA Security Campaign
Metrocard Vending Machine: “See Something,
Say Something”
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/trodriguezontiveros/>



2-5 2002–present MTA Security Campaign
Subway Announcement
http://www.flickr.com/photos/the_wb/197784863/

If you see a suspicious package
or activity on the platform or train,
don't keep it to yourself. Tell a cop, an
MTA employee, or call us toll-free at
1-888-NYC-SAFE.

2-6 2002–2003 MTA Security Campaign
Subway Version: “See Something, Say
Something” Specific Instructions



2-7 2003–present MTA Security Campaign:
“Subway/Black Bag”

Out of 816 calls serious enough to require investigation by the department's intelligence division or its joint terrorism task force with the FBI, 109 had a direct connection to the transit system. The calls have resulted in eighteen arrests by the New York Police Department, none of which had direct connection to terrorism. The majority of calls had nothing to do with the transit system and included reports of people believed to be selling fake ID cards, stockpiling weapons and trying to buy explosives (which turned out to be fireworks). There are two findings of particular note for Hero Reports. First, eleven callers reported a Muslim religious tradition of using a counter in prayer. Second, transit officials could not say where the number 1,944 came from.

The MTA campaign reflects a model for what Nick Vaughan-Williams (2008) in "Borderwork beyond Inside/Outside," calls "the citizen-detective." Under the auspices of the war on terror, the citizen becomes an arm of a distributed network where every day and everybody carries the possibility of threat" (Massumi 2005). Vaughan-Williams argues that since it is possible to identify the citizen as both an object under surveillance, as well as an agent of surveillance, then this mobilization of agents constitutes a (re)birth of the citizen-detective.

2.1.2 REFRAIN OF SUSPICION

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2004) refer to a refrain as "any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes." Through an assemblage of heterogeneous elements, a refrain illustrates the relations between shifting space and chaotic forces. This is not a territory that previously existed. Rather the refrain is created through performance-birds sing to mark their territory; radios and TVs build sound walls; and tattoos territorialize bodies (Deleuze and Guattari 2004).

The MTA's call to "See Something" and "Say Something" produces a performance of citizen-detective and in turn a "refrain of suspicion." With suspicion now as territory, the citizen-detective constitutes a form of border control. The citizen patrols the border between the 'good' life of the city and the 'suspicious' life of the terrorist. This border, however, exists as a space not readily identified as either internal or external. Any citizen may constitute a threat to national security imperatives.



2-8 2004 MTA Security Campaign:
<http://www.mta.info/mta/security/communications.htm>



2-9 2005 MTA Security Campaign:



2-10 2005 MTA Security Campaign:



2-11 2005 MTA Security Campaign:

What is at stake when such citizen-detectives patrol a city? Borders are “multiplied and reduced in their localisation, . . . thinned out and doubled, . . . no longer the shores of politics but . . . the space of the political itself” (Balibar 1998). Without distinction between safety and threat, every body materializes as a border and every citizen is responsible for border patrol.

The refrain of suspicion unites a nation against a common enemy. Yet unity does not look the same on each body. For, while bodies share base similarities, they are also different. The refrain of suspicion may register en masse, but our bodies neither act, nor are they acted upon, in same (Massumi 2005). In New York City, this paradox of shared and divided experience translates onto the MTA “See Something, Say Something” campaign. The refrain of suspicion legitimizes this call for the citizen-detective, but the social and cultural diversity of New York City guarantees that individual experience will not be uniform. Indeed, with the purposeful ambiguity of what to see and what to say, suspicion becomes objectless. Difference then, becomes more significant than united action. Anything outside personal normalcy can trigger (re)action, and any body outside the normal can be triggered upon.

In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler (2004) notes that such objectless suspicion can translate into a mandate that legitimizes “racialised ways of looking and judging”. Race, however, is not the entire field of vision and action. As the results from the 1,944 reports suggest, this “license for prejudicial perception” encompasses gender, class and religion, as well as race. Thus, the refrain of suspicion places both the guard and the guarded in an “indefinite containment” which spills “outside the prison walls” and onto the subway, airport and street (Butler). We cannot escape the suspicion; we are all part of the refrain. For as such calls for the citizen-detective as a safeguard against terror keep going, we only serve to reinforce terror’s reach.

2.2 WAYS OF MOVING

Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.

-German Proverb

According to the conventional wisdom of 1961, Boston’s North End was a crowded, noisy, messy, chaotic slum ready to be torn down (Kiesling

**LAST YEAR 1,944
NEW YORKERS SAW
SOMETHING AND
SAID SOMETHING.**

2-12 2006 MTA Security Campaign:

2006). Such wisdom did not go far in explaining the neighborhood's low rates of crime and disease. In her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs ([1961] 1992) offers an explanation. The same narrow streets that warrant conventional bulldozing, actually serve as opportunities for people to run into, and watch out for, each other. For Jacobs, these are the "eyes on the street" that keep a community safe. Today, the eyes of the street watch with Bulter's "prejudicial perception." What does urban safety look like through such a view?

The following section attempts an answer by investigating routine behavior vis-a-vis our vision and visualization of crime. "Looking at Fear" outlines some of the urban manifestations of fear. "Geographies of Crime" describes the importance of maps in understanding urban safety. And, finally, "Civility and Movement" explores a specific area of urban criminology-civility research-that emphasizes everyday movement as a measure of urban well-being.

2.2.1 LOOKING AT FEAR

In the aftermath of 9/11, fear moved from the introductory paragraph into the headlines (Grupp 2003). While prominent and pervasive, fear's manifestations were hardly uniform. In "The AtmosFEAR of Terror: Australian Muslims as Objects of Fear and Othering," Anne Aly and Mark Balnaves (2005) list the many ways of looking at fear. "Fear can be a rational response to the presence of a real danger or an irrational response to an imaginary danger; it can paralyse or it can motivate; it can serve a political purpose or it can serve a deep psychological need, it can be instinctive, inherent to our psychological makeup or it can be historically specific. "

The limit of fear, then, is the limit of our looking. Or, as Brian Massumi (2005) writes "Fear can go boldly wherever thought can reach, and thought can reach wherever our attention goes." In this war on terror, our attention is less and less on direct experience and more and more on abstract media. In consequence, Grupp (2003) concludes, "There has been a general shift from a fearsome life towards a life with fearsome media."

A political and media strategy developed that Corey Robin (2004) describes as savoring the experience of being afraid. This remembering of fear seeks to unify The American People against a representation of an

enemy whose simplified form disregards the diversity of the American populace. In the war on terror, the Muslim man is consistently cast as a “culturally incompatible and threatening other” (Aly and Balnaves, 2005). This reaffirmation of a collective unites a people against a common enemy while simultaneously denying membership to the Other.

Fear’s dynamic of Self, Other and Politic builds formulae that affect everyday thought and feeling (Ferudi 2007). Popular discourse on terrorism, however, explains fear as behavior based on emotion, rather than reason. It is through emotion that fear can be manipulated into a force for political gain. In this way, fear needs to be overcome and replaced with reason. As Steven Shaviro (1997) writes of Kant’s Sublime, “the appearance of Reason is a restoration of order and of closure.” But, just as techniques built against terror only serve to reinforce it, attempts to “overcome” fear only give strength to its worse manifestations: “superiority, nationalism and xenophobia” (Weber 2006). As such, a third perspective of political fear is required, the vision of fear as a process connecting the present perception of fear with future response to threat. As Masumi (2005) writes:

Threat is the cause of fear in the sense that it triggers and conditions fear’s occurrence, but without the fear it effects, the threat would have no handle on actual existence remaining purely virtual. The causality is bi-directional, operating immediately on both poles, in a kind of time-slip through which a futurity is made directly present without ceasing to be a futurity although they are in different tenses, present and future, and in different ontological modes, actual and virtual, fear and threat are of one piece. They are indissociable dimensions of the same event. The event, in its holding both tenses together in its own immediacy, in TRANSTEMPORAL. Since its transtemporality holds passage between the virtual and the actual, it is a PROCESS—a real transformation.

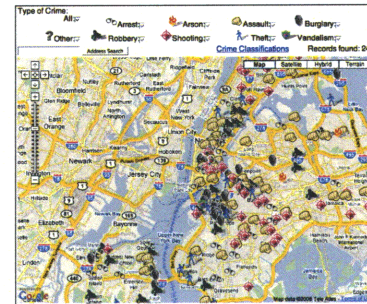
When security measures disregard this process of present and future, fear’s emotional capacity creates trigger reactions. True safety, then, keeps the process of both temporal perspectives. Only then does the immediacy of action connect with the potential of a city. Citizens do not trigger, but rather reflect and respond.

2.2.2 GEOGRAPHIES OF CRIME

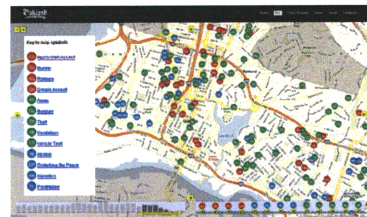
Mapping is a process of finding and giving meaning to information. Mapping makes visible the invisible. Databases obscured in lists and spreadsheets begin to mean something when their information is mapped. That meaning can shift a city. As Kazys Varnelis and Leah Meisterlin (2008) of Netlab write “The visualization of unseen urban conditions can alter the conditions themselves. By revealing the city in



2-13 Gothamist Crime Map (Faneuil 2008)



2-14 SpotCrime is a mashup that plots recent criminal activity onto Google Maps, allowing users to shy away from seedier parts of towns they may not be familiar with.



2-15 Oakland Crime Spotting
<http://flickr.com/photos/densitydesign/>



2-16 Homicide Records: New York Police Department Population: U.S. Census data compiled by Andrew A. Beveridge, Queens College Sociology Department (Faneuil 2006)

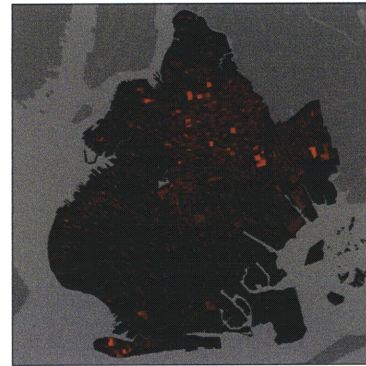
maps, a new city is made.”

Maps represent spatial relationships as much as they reveal social relationships. By developing and visualizing data sets of these relations, cartographers create new contextualizations of a city. For the past thirty years, ‘crime maps’ have played a significant role in the public discourse of safety. Now, online crime maps allow community residents and policy makers to locate crime statistics in terms of neighborhoods (Figures 13-16). These maps are important images of safety in our cities, and an essential part of civic decision-making.

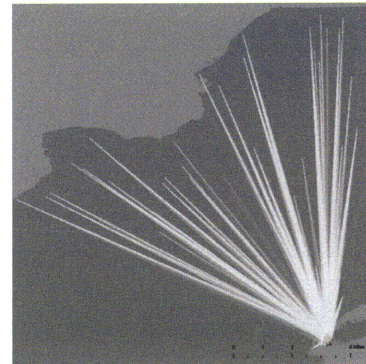
Departing from these traditional visualizations, recent works investigates alternatives for mapping crime to civic discourse. The Spatial Information Design Lab and the Justice Mapping Center at Columbia University (Cadora and Kurgan, 2006) interrogate the traditional way crime maps are visualized (Figures 17-19). By looking at the movement, dynamics and relationships of crime, poverty, prison incarceration and neighborhood, they have identified “million dollar blocks.” These single inner city blocks identify where states are spending in excess of a million dollars a year to incarcerate their residents. When criminal justice data is geographically aggregated and mapped for movement, the focus shifts from “case-by-case analysis of the crime and punishment of an individual, away from the geographic notation of crime events” (Cadora and Kurgan, 2006). The resulting map allows for multiple perspectives simultaneously. As the researchers conclude: “Identify an area. Zoom in, and examine the specific conditions. Zoom out, and then consider both scales at the same time. The resulting image is no longer Hard Data. It is a Soft Map that is infinitely scalable, absolutely contingent, and open to vision, and hence, revision” (Cadora and Kurgan, 2006).

2.2.3 MOVEMENT & CIVILITY

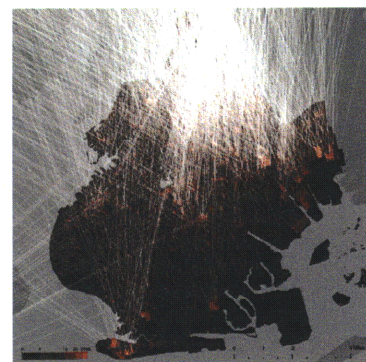
The city always reflects cultural scripts towards difference. As Richard Sennett (1989) writes, “A city isn’t just a place to live, to shop, and to go out and have kids play. It’s a place that implicates how one derives one’s ethics, how one develops a sense of justice, how one learns to talk with and *learn from people who are unlike oneself, which is how a human being becomes human.*” Similarly, Ash Amin (2006) claims that the “good city” rests upon a tolerance of difference, as well as a care and regard for otherness.



2-17 Million Dollar Blocks: prison expenditures by census block in Brooklyn, NY, 2003, represented as dollar totals



2-18 Million Dollar Blocks: prison migration patterns, Brooklyn to New York State, 2003



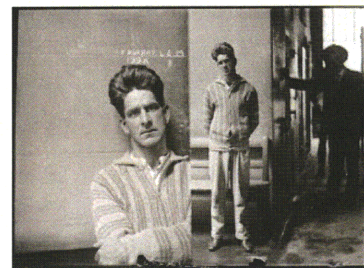
2-19 Million Dollar Blocks: prison migration patterns, Brooklyn, NY, 2003

In part, this “practical urban utopianism” of difference and multiplicity builds from the everyday negotiation of space. If we understand the city as Walter Benjamin’s network through which humans circulate between nodes of work, play and sleep then everyday modes of movement reveal this process. In the structured but fluid city, everyday movement coordinate a training ground for seeing and treating the Other.

Recent research explores the significance of everyday movement within the context of urban safety. Competition for space, divergent speeds and encumbered movement are all possible generators of what Claude S. Fischer (1999) calls, “embodied collisions” or what policy makers call “incivility.” As an applied area of criminology, incivility research typically relates “signs of disorder” to a neighborhood’s economic and social capital (Taylor 1999). In “Rethinking Urban Incivility Research: Strangers, Bodies and Circulations,” Timothy Phillips and Philip Smith (2006) argue that while some incivilities are associated “with crime, with fear and with social deprivation,” others are just par for the daily routine.

By looking at incivility as a routine feature of city life, rather than as a stigmatised and localized phenomenon to be feared, we begin to distinguish places where everyday civility and perhaps heroism, are most probable. In their study of low-level incivility, experienced in the daily life of Australians Phillips and Smith (2006) isolated properties of embodied movement relevant to Hero Reports:

- Locations associated with public transportation—railway stations, bus stops and car parks—are notably more risk-prone than consumption venues such as malls, clubs and pubs. It appears that “‘getting somewhere’ is more dangerous than ‘being somewhere’ and that what we might think of as the uninteresting, in-between spaces of daily life where people must pass but do not particularly wish to be or stay are less regulated and more risk-prone than their intended destinations.”
- The density of embodied movement increases the odds of an unpleasant encounter.
- Not youth, but ‘respectable’ people such as the middle-aged and elderly were the likely perpetrators of an everyday incivility.
- Incivilities could take a variety of forms, but most involved the body



2-20 The City of Shadows, compiled by Peter Doyle, Sydney police photographs from 1912-1948 (Cartland 2007).

or language.

- The odds of encountering a more serious incivility are greatest for those who live in a large city, who travel frequently on foot through transport nodes, and who move more slowly than those around them.

Phillips and Smith (2006) precedential expansion of incivility research to include the everyday, attempts to articulate the parameters of urban respect. Similarly, Hero Reports also looks toward the small encounter as a rich reflection of a city's well being. The difference rests in focus of productive rather than destructive forms of behavior. Instead of identifying parameters of incivility Hero Reports sees civic engagement, otherwise called everyday heroism, as a measure of a city's well being.

2.3 ENVISIONING HEROISM

Imagination is not a gift usually associated with bureaucracies.

-The 9/11 Commission Report

Michel Foucault ([1977] 1980) describes history as a form of war rather than of language. Following Foucault then, relations of power and not relations of meaning formalize a performance of Hero and Monster. What American models of visibility envision the current war? This section first reviews an aesthetic of terror incorporated by political, entertainment and news discourse to engender the Hero and Monster. Following, the section looks of how these aesthetics of terror access everyday behaviors of the body to codify a battle for justice. The aesthetics of terror combine with everyday justice frame the visual milieu of Hero Reports' (re)presentation of Hero.

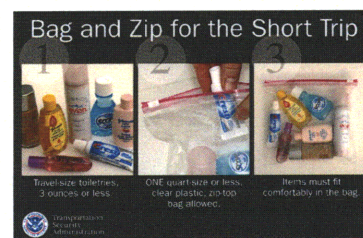
2.3.1 THE TRANSPARENCY OF TERROR.

According to Rachel Hall (2007) in "Of Ziploc Bags and Black Holes," the aesthetics of transparency portrays security in terms of visibility. What we can see—transparency—is safe; what we can't see—opacity—is threatening. The modern articulation of security as a fluid dynamic of transparency and opacity began with the police photograph (Figure 20). As Hall (2007) explains, "While a thief was often a good liar, a photograph of a thief—it was believed—could not lie." With photographic imaging, the technology of a camera created what Roland Barthes (1982) calls, "the power of authentication." Yet as soon as the ability to (re)produce an image exists, the artistry of the production supposedly risks overpowering



2-21 Historical Mug Shot

<http://www.mugshots.com/Historical/History-Of-mugshots.htm>



2-22 Bag Poster, Transportation Security Administration, US Department of Homeland Security, 2006

and overshadowing the “truth.”²

Tensions between power, shadow and truth, as embodied by the photographed image, underpin the aesthetics of transparency. As Michel Foucault says in conversation with Jean Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot visibility represents “a mode of operation through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen in a sort of immediate, collective and anonymous gaze.” Started during the Enlightenment and extended through the Panopticon, such legibility produces power as “subjection by illumination.” Areas of darkness—whether of the body or of city—are not tolerated (Foucault [1977] 1980a)

In the United States’ current political climate, visibility empowers agents of surveillance, including the citizen-detective, to produce the body as visible and therefore transparent to government translation. For instance, docile citizens conceive others *and* themselves as objects amenable to bag searches, zip-locked toiletries and retina scans, all for the right of passage (Figure 22). Hall (2007) calls this manifestation of transparency, “body without words.” In this strategy of power, the body, and not one’s modes of being, reveals itself as truth.

This economy of truth propagates under “a few great political and economic apparatuses,” including academic, military and news disciplines (Foucault [1977] 1980b). These sites of production produce and maintain truth within circular systems of power. (Foucault [1977] 1980b). As a condition of capitalism, the *search* for truth in the war on terror creates a consumer spectacle where what cannot be seen terrifies. In response, the good (i.e., visible) body must ferret out the hidden. As the counterweight to the visible body, the opaque Other personifies the terror of darkness. .

The fear of darkened spaces full of darkened bodies has long haunted political discourse (Foucault [1977] 1980a). Hall (2007) points to the photographs of Saddam Hussein’s capture as a contemporary example contemporary of darkness mediated as a potential space of horror in its obstruction of truth. Figure 23 and 34, capture the *moment* when visibility defeats opacity. The terrorist’s “cover has been removed” as we become privy to the caverns of Hussein’s spider hole and oral exam

² To mitigate these concerns regarding the photographic manipulation of truth, the standardized mug shot (Figure 21) emerged (Hall 2007)



2-23 In the aesthetics of transparency the terrorist is opaque, and a photographic spectacle must bring the darkness to light. Above: Going underground In a small orange grove on a farm near the village of Adwar, US soldiers pulled back a tarpaulin to discover the entrance to Saddam Hussein’s bolthole. Efreem Lukatsky/AP
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gall/0,,1106953,00.html>



2-24 Below: Captured former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein undergoes medical examination in Baghdad. Associated Press Images
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gall/0,,1106953,00.html>



2-24 Nancy Burson. Warhead I (55% Reagan, 45% Brezhnev, less than 1% each of Thatcher, Mitterand and Deng.) 1982

(Figure 24). These images of what Hall (2007) calls “darkness and interiority” demonstrate the spectacle of seeing into the darkness.

For the upcoming show, “The Aesthetics of Terror,” curators Manon Slome and Joshua Simon (2008) write, “Terror is, in and of itself, an image making machine. The very point of terror is a spectacle that plays endlessly in the media.” The immediacy of television, the Internet and other networked information, strategically forwards the endless time line of spectacle. Visibility projects everywhere in real time, all the time.

Immediacy guarantees spectacle but not accuracy or authenticity. Both technology and opacity obscure the specifics. Fear and xenophobia are left to fill the holes. Like a suspect sketch or a Nancy Burson photograph (Figure 25), the opaque citizen becomes an amalgamation of everyone, and no one. And, in the words of the Algerian narrator of Reda Bensmaïa’s novel *The Year of Passages* (1995), “they’ve glued on us a face that looks like a mug shot.” A machinery of power projects its own truth onto a body clothed in shadows. In balance to the previous formulation of “body without words,” calls this projection of transparency “words without a body” (Hall 2007).

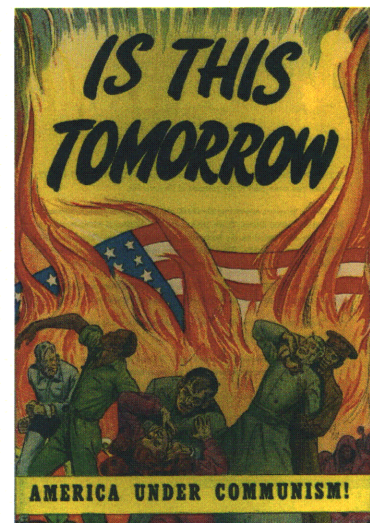
The current codification of visibility, shifts the body from one inclusive of interior spaces toward one of legible surfaces. As only a surface the body dissociates from the word and a certain silence falls. Paul Virilio suggests in *Art & Fear*, that silence is often misread as consent: “Nowadays everything that remains silent is deemed . . . to accept without a word of protest . . . the *optically correct*.” Consequently, silence seems to no longer have a voice (2003). Virilio, however, argues that when knowledge comes through the immediacy of glancing, one will not hear silence. In other words, deafness censors the message of silence. By eliciting the voice of typically silent bodies, Hero Reports shifts the codification of visibility to include hidden spaces

2.3.2 EVERYDAY EVIL

We naively believe that the progress of the Good, its rise in all domains (sciences, techniques, democracy, human rights) correspond to a defeat of Evil. Nobody seems to understand that Good and Evil rise simultaneously, and in the same movement. The triumph of the One does not produce the erasure of the Other. Metaphysically, one considers Evil as an accident, but this axiom, embedded in all manichean fights of Good against Evil, is illusory. Good does not reduce Evil, nor vice-versa: there are both irre-



2-26 “Who wants to know? : Silence means security.” 1943.
Source: Northwestern University, .



2-27 The Dangers of a Communist Takeover.
1947 Source: Wikipedia

ducible, and inextricable from each other. In fact, Good could defeat Evil only by renouncing itself, as by appropriating a global power monopoly, it creates a response of proportional violence.

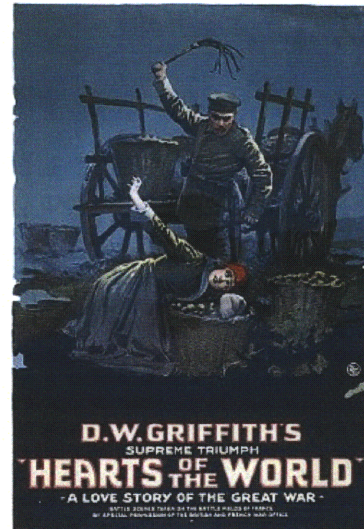
-Jean Baudrillard writes in "The Spirit of Terrorism"

As the troubled and inevitable shadow, the monster distorts physical, moral or social norms. They resemble Us; They are part of Us. In the current political climate, President Bush might see that "evil now has a face," but most Americans are left with a monster of no discernible markings. The inability to see evil makes its power omnipotent. As Shumon Basar (2006) writes in "Can You See More Clearly Now?: Monsters are Everywhere," this current evil "is profoundly disturbing precisely because he/she short circuits the stereotypical projection employed whereby Evil, we maintain, gives itself away through the manner of its appearance" (Basar 2006). What is heroism against this invisible enemy?

One way to access the Hero is to explore the nature of the fight. The indistinguishable face of the monster grounds the battle in the ordinary terrain of the everyday. As Hannah Arendt noted while observing the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, this everyday is far more terrifying than all the atrocities put together. And, much like World War II and the Cold War (Figure 26-27), this fight for the everyday turns into a moral imperative.

The cultural sculpting of this fight marks an alliance between the military, technology and entertainment industries. This mixing of spectacle, technology and war stretches from the birth of film with D.W. Griffiths *Hearts of the World* (Figure 28) to the current rehabilitation treatments of Virtual Iraq (Figure 29). The lack of distinction between the figure of hero—in politics, in Hollywood and in technology, encodes the fight as veiled political allegories of entertainment (Basar 2006).

So while the battleground is the ordinary, the Hero is the extraordinary manifestation of a military, technology and entertainment narrative. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2001) tells us: "Don't be afraid. . . be ready!" But, against a backdrop of threat capable of immobilizing the United States, the individual stands vulnerable. We might be on the ground with the monster, but no mere human can fight such pathological evil. An exceptional human is needed for these exceptional times (Basar 2006). The Hero then, is not human, but rather a su-



2-28 DW Griffiths *Hearts of the World* Poster, 1918. Source: KJA Consulting

perhuman-trained by the military, geared with technology and strengthened through Hollywood. This narrative of Hero creates a population unable to protect itself. We are the audience, watching and needing to be saved.

An imperative of domestic tranquility, wealth and leisure, creates what Edward W. Said (1978) calls, the trap of the West against the Rest dichotomies. The Hero fights for a illusory memory where peace means the haves of the world are not afraid of the have-nots. This mourning of Western values also suffers from lost masculinity. As a symbol of masculine strength, the fall of the World Trade Center could only be rehabilitated by men. Male politicians, rescue workers and, above all, firefighters, were celebrated as Hero, and women as their helpmates (Grupp). With heroism accessible to the ordinary rather than autonomous and beyond human, Hero Reports attempts to create a archetype of hero that include the Rest alongside the West.



2-29 Virtual Iraq

3. RELATED RESEARCH

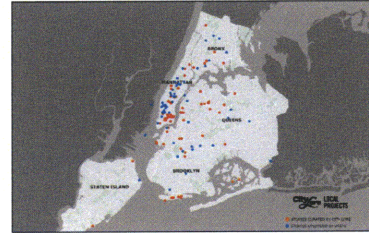
At the intersection of multiple disciplines, works relating to news aggregation, civic media, artistic intervention and social cooperation provides key technological precedents for Hero Reports. Following is a description of these four areas of approach, as well as specific works that inform Hero Reports' implementation.

3.1 NEWS AGGREGATION

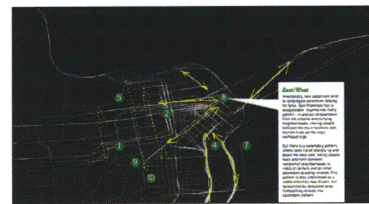
Hero Reports supports direct submission of personal content through a variety of means, including an online form, toll-free recording, and mailed correspondence. Such self-report combines with articles initially published outside the Hero Reports network. The heterogeneous collection of solicited stories alongside existing media builds the hero database. This model of mixed content source aligns with numerous online story-mapping projects, including City of Memory (Figure 1) and In Transit (Figure 2). The former locates New York City memories collected from on site submission as well as historical content collected by the City Museum. The latter overlays taxi cab statistics, questions, and scenarios across ten sites in and near San Francisco.

Hero Reports' emphasis on news articles veers from the personal perspective of City of Memory toward the civic possibilities found in Iraq Body Count (IBC). Started in 2003 by human rights researchers Hamit Dardagan and John Sloboda, IBC is "the most authoritative independent source on Iraqi casualties." By collecting data from existing coverage of civilian reported deaths, IBC maintains the only independent and public database of Iraq's civilian body count. This aggregation of discrete news stories connects singular moments into a mass of human loss.

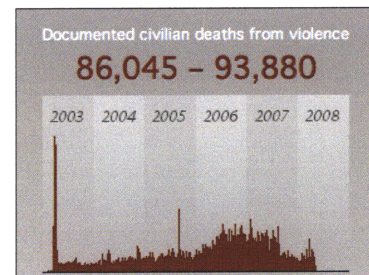
The cultural meaning and legacy of the news story shifts when placed in context of others. Such meaning is not intrinsic to the numbers but builds from the people who use them. Indeed, the inaccuracy of the IBC total often comes second to adaptation of the numbers for cultural significance. IBC allows for a range of civic engagement, from street performances (Figure 4) to presidential speeches. This building of a database for civic adaptation provides an applied model, and inspiration, for Hero Reports.



3-1 City of Memory, an interactive repository for New York City's stories.



3-2 In Transit is a map that sits on top of the cabspotting data. It overlays statistics, questions, and scenarios across ten sites in and near San Francisco.



3-3 Iraq Body Count is an ongoing human security project which maintains and updates the world's largest public database of civilian deaths since the 2003 invasion.



3-4 Cherry Blossoms Performance 2007.
Source: Author

The geographic filtering of news services like EveryBlock (Figure 5), outside.in (Figure 6), and Yahoo's ourCity (Figure 7) provide a model for Hero Reports' mapping strategies. In contrast to traditional news sources, heterogeneous content is organized to answer the EveryBlock mission: "What's happening in my neighborhood?" These hyper local services aggregate three types of content: news articles, "fun across the web," and civic information (EveryBlock 2008). Searching varied data by location empowers the citizen with unforeseen access to neighborhood dynamics. As Brad Flora (2008) exclaims in the Chicago newspaper *The Windy City*, the presentation of readable government databases presents new possibilities for the citizen journalist. Meanwhile John Geraci of outside.in notes that local searching allows readers to decide what's important (Fawkes 2008).

With news either geo-relevant or geo-irrelevant, the challenge arises of balancing local and global perspectives. In other words, even if varied in source, news only from a local filer can isolate rather than empower civic dialog. Hero Reports balances the tension of local and global by using geographic filtering of its heterogeneous content while maintaining some of the editorial aspects of traditional broadcast media. Featured reports and themed sections make geography one of many ways to prioritize reports.

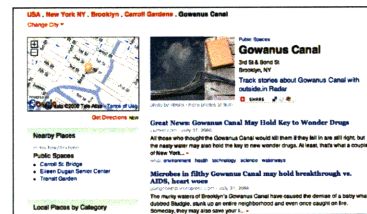
3.2 CIVIC MEDIA

The mapping of such news services like Every Block contribute valuable examples of visualizing and searching aggregated content. Further, Every Block's departure from the now canonical Google aesthetic and functionality, provided a precedent for using OpenLayers, an open source Java Script library for customized Hero Maps. Mapping techniques like Overplot that emphasize neighborhoods (Figure 8) or transportation maps that emphasize movement (Figure 9) as an organizational principle provided inspiration for early Hero Map sketches (Figure 10).

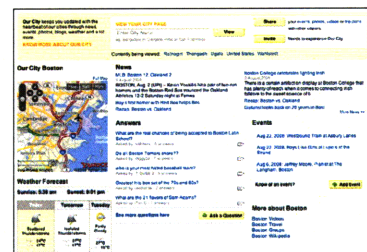
By mapping qualitative data of the psychological and financial well-being of a neighborhood. Rotten Neighbor uses an aggregation of subjective data sources to reflect real-estate value (Figure 11). By mapping user-provided complaints about neighbors, Rotten Neighbor claims it helps others find their "dream neighborhood." As editor of the *Star Tribune* writes, the result "is an endless supply of self-righteous, clueless,



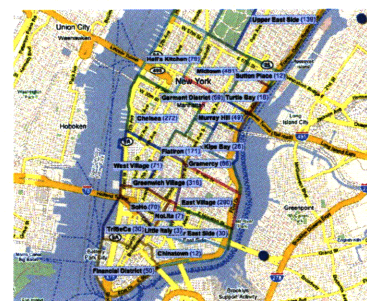
3-5 Every Block map for Brooklyn Zipcode 11231



3-6 Outside.in news for Brooklyn Neighborhood Carroll Gardens



3-7 Yahoo OurCity for Boston

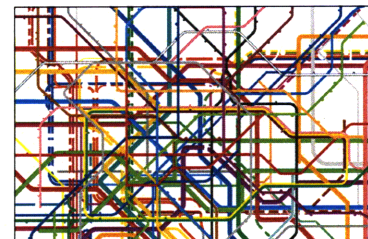
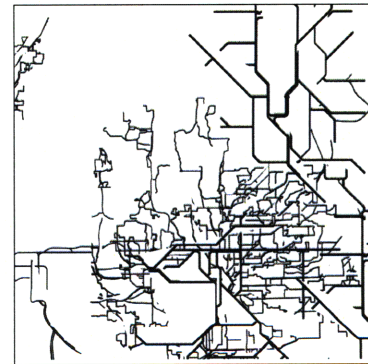
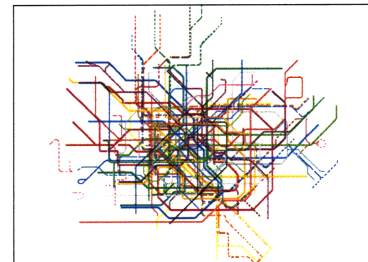


3-8 Overplot maps *Overheard in New York* content onto the neighborhoods of

SpotCrime is a mashup that plots recent criminal activity onto Google Maps, allowing users to shy away from seedier parts of towns they may not be familiar with.



3-9 North American Subways, Bill Rankin
2005 <http://www.radicalcartography.net/?subways>



30

3.3 ARTISTIC INTERVENTION

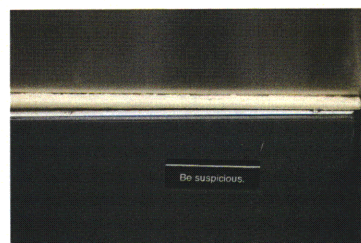
Works responding to the “See Something, Say Something” campaign include a range of media, from sculpture and video to graffiti and performance (Figure 12-13). These works often provoke and critique the ambiguity of the MTA’s campaign. In contrast to Hero Reports, which attempts to construct a complementary awareness campaign, these interventions can attempt to deconstruct the MTA’s message. Such critique offers valuable dialog and insight on how to position Hero Reports constructive tools.

Two high profile responses to the “See Something, Say Something” campaign were both public art inventions. In December 2002, an art student from the School of Visual Arts placed 38 black boxes in the Union Square subway station. The bomb squad shut the station for five hours, and a ripple effect of chaos and panic ensued (Chan 2007). The student was charged with reckless endangerment.

In 2006, two Pratt students (Figure 15) placed five self-proclaimed ‘suspicious packages’ in the same station. Consisting of a cardboard tube and four bags stuffed with The New York Post and comic strips, the packages were labeled with the slogan “If You See Something, Say Something” and the phone number 1-888-NYC-SAFE. According to Janet Chan, in “Dangerous Art and Suspicious Packages,” both students were charged with five counts of placing false bombs in transit areas, a felony that carries a penalty of up to seven years in prison (2007).

These, combined with site-specific interventions in other cities, not only demonstrate the ambiguity of the MTA slogan, but also the ambiguity of art in the current war on terror. Artistic response to the signs and symbols of security provoke unpredictable public reaction. Nonetheless, these interventions show how the ‘suspicious package’ has infiltrated our consciousness as an object of danger. (Chan).

Works in other media also question the ‘infiltrated presence’ of the MTA call. A performance by Mike Daisey titled “If You See Something Say Something” debuted in June 2008. Using comedy and personal narrative, Daisey’s work describes “the history of the Department of Homeland Security and about the father of the neutron bomb . . . and my efforts to answer the question of what it means to be secure.” Meanwhile, 8A Collective uses the MTA material to describe implementa-



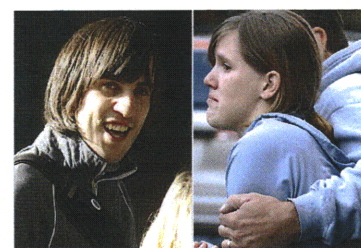
3-12 NYC subway graffiti response to suspicious activity
<http://flickr.com/photos/dogseat/1008592680/>



3-13 “If You See Something Say Something” (2006), by Chris McEvoy
Source: Artist Site



3-14 “Unattended Suspicious Package” (2006), by Ulrike Palmbach.
Source: Stephen Wirtz Gallery



3-15 Robert Barrett and Jamie Davis of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, placed five suspicious art packages in the subway, 2006.

tions of fear (Figure 16). Their method of replicating and destroying the supplied materials represents the damage they associate with the city's desired control of fear.

In the spring of 2007, Hunter College MFA Integrated Media Arts adopted the MTA's call of vigilance for its show, "If You See Something, Say Something" (Figure 17). As the curators explain: "If You See Something, Say Something" presents a wide range of creative responses to troubling issues and anti-democratic developments that have punctuated the first decade of the new millennium . . . the exhibit represents our current contributions toward a global dialog of criticism, protest and liberation. These are dangerous times. Too many of the perils we face are homegrown. We hope you will SEE and SAY something, too."

The show opened a student exhibit, as well as the collective Making Trouble Alliance (MTA). Using terminology borrowed from the other MTA—Metropolitan Transit Authority—the Making Trouble Alliance choreographed an event of "unidentified citizens" and "suspicious devices."

The same year, but across the globe, another "If You See Something, Say Something" exhibit opened (Figure 18). Venues throughout Sydney and Melbourne, Australia hosted a month-long international discussion on the cultural milieu and consequences of the "See Something, Say Something" campaign. As the newsletter from the exhibit describes: "Do we see this government sponsored vision of the world or do these advertisements move us to say something very different? In the state of exception produced by the war on terror we are asked to accept a consensual vision of fear, scapegoating and state sponsored violence. Yet many are moved to dissent from this." This democracy of dissent, termed dissensus, inspired a range of creative outpouring (Figure 19). By questioning prevailing notions of consensus, both exhibits attempted to create a new aesthetics of social agency.

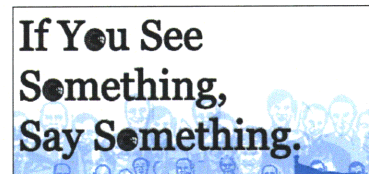
From the terminology to the posters, artifacts of the MTA campaign are remixed to create a new context and, hopefully, a new dialog. This cultural remixing often uses satire, criticism and provocation for technique. And, as the Australia exhibit demonstrates, it is confined to neither New York City nor the United States. A recent remixing of a London security campaign demonstrates how the ambiguity typical of these posters allow for re-appropriation.



3-16 "Thank you for not keeping your suspicions to yourself" (2008) 8A Collective
<http://www.8acollective.com/8A/gallery.html>



3-17 Logo for the Spring 2007 Hunter College MFA Show "If You See Something, Say Something." <http://www.see-say.org/>



3-18 Logo for the 2007 exhibit "If You See Something, Say Something." in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia. Organizers: Keg de Souza and Zanny Begg



3-19 "Self Portrait 1788 – 2006" Daniel Boyd. Shown in the "If You See Something, Say Something" exhibit in Australia 2007.

3.4 CREATING POSITIVE NORMS

Hero Reports engineers a social shift.

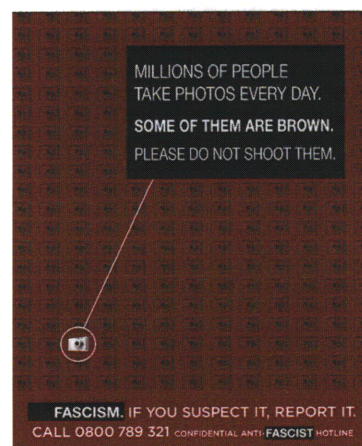
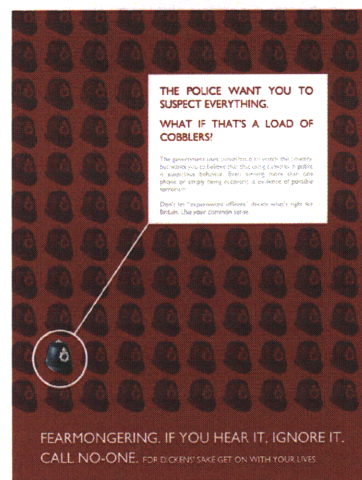
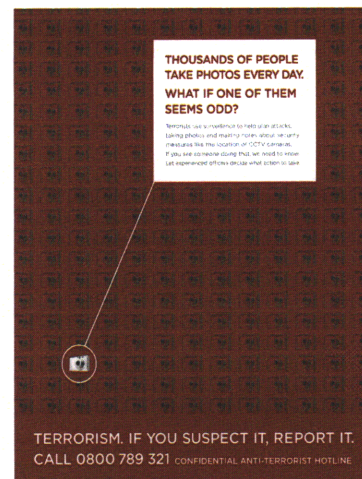
Imaged by military, technology and entertainment industries a matrix of fear normalizes the behavior of both the citizen detective and the hero. These socialized roles based on distrust neither directly nor exclusively dictate all cultural ideals. But in the current dynamics and economies of norms, the calls for distrust risk subsuming balancing values such as compassion and empathy. Hero Reports intervenes in the quotidian processes of social normalization to create positive community norms. The creation of positive community norms is one of the main contributions of Hero Reports.

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses, and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault [1977] 1980).

3.4.1 THE COOPERATION OF OTHERS

With the "See Something, Say Something" campaign, fellow passengers are painted as potential enemies in the name of security. Perhaps, however, true safety requires a campaign of *social* cooperation—not simply cooperation with the authorities but cooperation with each other. Our ability to cooperate with strangers, often in large groups, is unmatched in the animal kingdom. The human ability to create and enforce social norms accounts for this unprecedented level of cooperation.

Social norms define the ways group member *ought* to behave in a given situation (Bernhard 2006). The willingness to enforce these social norms, even if doing so carries little chance of reward and significant personal cost is called altruistic punishment. (Fehr 2004). In an interview with *The New York Times*, Fehr further illuminates the importance of altruistic punishment for establishing large-scale cooperation: "Every citizen is a little policeman in a sense. There are so many social norms that we follow almost unconsciously, and they are enforced by the moral outrage we expect if we were to violate them" (Angier 2002). The metaphor of policeman to guide an unconscious morality relates to the construction of the citizen detective. Indeed, in the same article



3-20 The latest London security Campaign (top) and two redesigns. Fearmongering by rubin 110 (middle) Fascism by illegal photos (bottom)

Angier (2002) suggests that some of the most odious of human behaviors, including torture, may be examples of “altruistic punishment run amok.”

Understanding the enforcement of social norms necessitates understanding the group affiliations that help define appropriate behavior. According to Helen Bernhard (2006) cooperation differs within and across groups under all sorts of situations. Individuals show ingroup favorites with group affiliation comes into play. Ingroup favoritism is the tendency of most people to treat members of their own group more favorably than outgroup members. Relevant to Hero Reports are the types of bodies and behaviors that fall outside group boundaries and as such violate social norms. Or as Hansrudi Lenz (2008) asks in “Why Act Morally? Economic and Philosophical Reasons” where are the boundaries of human norm-abiding behavior in interactions between different ethnic groups? While recent research shows that group affiliation plays a salient role in human cooperation, its implication for such a diverse group as New York City remain unclear (Bernhard 2006).

3.4.2 ONLINE COOPERATION

Group affiliation manifests in the cooperation of online communities—where actors exist in relative or absolute anonymity. Peter Kollock (1998) in “The Economies of Online Cooperation, Gifts and Public Goods in Cyberspace,” argues that a concept known as *generalized exchange* accounts for the high levels of cooperations amidst such anonymous actors. Kollock (1998) explains generalized exchange by way of an example that could double as a hero report: “If I helped a stranded motorist in my community, I do not expect that motorist to return the favor, but I may hope and expect someone else in the community to offer me aid should I be in a similar situation.”

The generalize exchange economy balances the cost of giving to a particular ingroup member with the benefit of reciprocation from *any* ingroup member. Most generalized exchanges take place within group boundaries. People commonly believe that a favor given to an ingroup members will not be a waste an investment, while a favor given to an outgroup member will not be reciprocated within the other’s own group (Bernhard 2006).

Such ingroup generalized exchange is both generous as well as risky. The generosity of giving without expectation of immediate reciprocity

also creates the temptation to take advantage of such generosity (Kollock 1998). If everyone succumbs to the temptation of taking and not giving then no one benefits. And as Kollock (1998) claims, this generalized exchange has the structure of a social dilemma – individually reasonable behavior (gathering by not offering) leads to collective disaster.

3.4.3 MOTIVATION TO COOPERATE

Because altruistic punishment is not an automatic response, but rather based on deliberation and intent, humans need to be motivated to punish (Quervain et al. 2004). Related, people need to be motivated to cooperate. Hero Reports' call for a collective dialog regarding social norms necessitates motivational structures. What motivations drive people to participate in a cooperative and collective dialog?

Kollock (1998) isolates five motivations for online cooperation-reciprocity, reputation, sense of efficacy, need and attachment. All five motivations parallel the dynamic between costs and benefits when contributing to the Hero Reports.

Reciprocity: Hero Reports attempts to create an economy of generalized exchange. A Hero Reporter might contribute a story of acknowledgment as reciprocation for receiving favor. Reciprocity, then, anticipates a balance, a sort of karma, where one contributes to the group in the expectation that one will receive help in return. With accounts not kept in exact or continual balance, the system is open to abuse and dissolution. Distinct group boundaries and persistent identity—two features not necessary to Hero Reports—encourage contributions based on reciprocity.

Reputation: Another possible motivation is the effect of contributions to one's reputation and desire for prestige. Contributions will likely be increased to the degree that the contribution is visible to the community as a whole and to the extent there is some recognition of the person's contributions, e.g., I did this great thing and I want to reward myself, and I want you to know.

Sense of efficacy: Hero Reports argues that through collective action, a community can shift social norms. A third possible motivation, then, is that a person contributes valuable information because the act results

in a sense of efficacy. One has some effect and makes some impact on his/her city. Contributions are likely to be increased to the extent that people can observe changes in their communities attributable to their actions. As a community grows, and in turn potential audience for a contribution, one's sense of efficacy can also grow. A larger audience offers greater impact for one's actions.

The previous three motivations of online cooperation, as outlined by Kollock (1998), stem from self-interest. They suggest some personal benefits for contributing a hero report. The following two motivators of online cooperation value altruism.

Need: One might contribute to a cooperative community in order to fulfill another's need. For instance, a request for help on a software forum motivates an individual with requested information to contribute. At present, Hero Reports does not have such clarity of needs. No specific calls for help (e.g., "I've fallen, and I can't get up!") directly initiate an everyday heroism. The articulation of need could offer Hero Reports a means for sustainability.

Attachment: Finally, a more general motivation is the attachment to group, otherwise called group affiliation. The good of the group enters the utility equation, and one contributes because contribution is best for the individual and collective. Personal and group are merged and there is no social dilemma for generalized exchange.

The merging of citizens and city into a multiplicity of cooperation is the utopian ideal of Hero Reports. But not only do the desires and costs of contribution, always moderate group attachment (Kollock 1998) but attachment to a single group can hinder intergroup cooperation. Hero Reports envisions heterogeneous groups modelling social norms that embrace and not reject difference.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

A new vigilance campaign that follows up on the Metropolitan Transit Authority anti-terror surveillance program, Hero Reports (<http://hero-reports.org>) asks people to look for specific incidents of heroism, generosity and civic engagement in New York City, however small and fleeting they may seem. Recent incidents around the world have taught us that the public can play a vital role in keeping a city safe. Engaging the eyes and ears of citizens can help identify potential threats. But safety only through the lens of suspicion can divide rather than unite us. Hero Reports offers a chance to encourage and recognize community strength.

Here's how it works: See someone perform an act of courage, selflessness or special courtesy: challenging a racist stereotype, providing a stranger's bus fare, helping a disabled person across the street, assisting someone in difficulty. Even small acts of community will count. Participants will fill out a report and submit it to Hero Reports (<http://hero-reports.org>). The pilot program has a similar look and feel to the MTA anti-terror advertisements, but includes online and text-messaging services, along with MTA's phone and print aspects. The social networks in Flickr and Facebook allow users to post and comment on happenings of civic engagement, while the Hero Reports site aggregates and maps incident specifics.

To match the number of suspicion reports posted under the MTA's anti-terror program, the Hero Reports campaign will curate at least 1,944 reports of civic courage. This collection of reports will be presented to the New York MTA as a public document and performance.

Hero Reports is committed to enhancing public security based on awareness and dialog, by encouraging others to get involved and pay attention to the context of the other. A lot of people care about safety in New York City, yet only paying attention to suspicious activity can have a toxic effect on our communities. By providing a database and community forum for civic engagement in our public spaces, we are not only able to make more accurate reports about suspicious activity, but we also enable people to come together in strength instead of fear.

The following chapter describes the technological foundations and de-

sign methodology for building the Hero Reports system. Part 1 *Input* covers mechanisms for content contribution, while Part 2 *Output* reviews the means for content display. Part 3 *Design Methodology* describes the design process of Hero Reports, including design milestone and present priorities.

4.1 INPUT

Designed for a broad demographic, irrespective of technological preference, Hero Reports allows for submission of reports through a variety of means. Sometimes overlapping and in various stages of public distribution, these inputs combine to allow multifaceted contribution. The specifics of the Hero Reports input tools are outlined below. All avenues of input are complete and will continue in live development.

WEB SITE

Personal accounts of heroism are the backbone of the project, and the web site alone provides the multiple functionality of display, map, search and submission (Figure 1). Its importance rose as a major focus of development.



4-1 Home Page of the General Hero Reports Website

Correspondingly, the web site saw three design iterations, which are further discussed in the next section. In its present stage, reports can

be submitted directly for automatic integration via the report form (Figure 2). In order to map and tally reports, the incident 'description' and 'location' fields are required. Optional fields include 'title,' 'key-words,' 'contact info,' 'image' and 'URL.' Contact information is only for possible investigation of a story. Check boxes specify the 'source,' 'category' and 'place' of the incident to be specified. All additional information helps with search and sorting of reports and can be edited by administrators.

HERO REPORTS

SUBMIT GALLERY SEARCH ABOUT HOME

MAKE THE "GOOD CALL"

The help of the public is critically important to maintaining a high level of security for the city. Keep us safe. Report the civic courage that makes a difference.

Complete an Incident Report, below.

TITLE

INCIDENT

CROSS STREET

TAGS

IMAGE

URL

CATEGORY

- ☐ lost & found
- ☐ life and death
- ☐ unsolicited assistance
- ☐ other

SOURCE

- ☐ happened to me
- ☐ in the news
- ☐ eyewitness
- ☐ other

PLACE

- ☐ lost & found
- ☐ life and death
- ☐ unsolicited assistance
- ☐ other

Or tell us by:

EMAIL **PHONE**

PHOTO **LETTER**

PREVIEW **SUBMIT**

This way to say something → → →

4-2: Report form

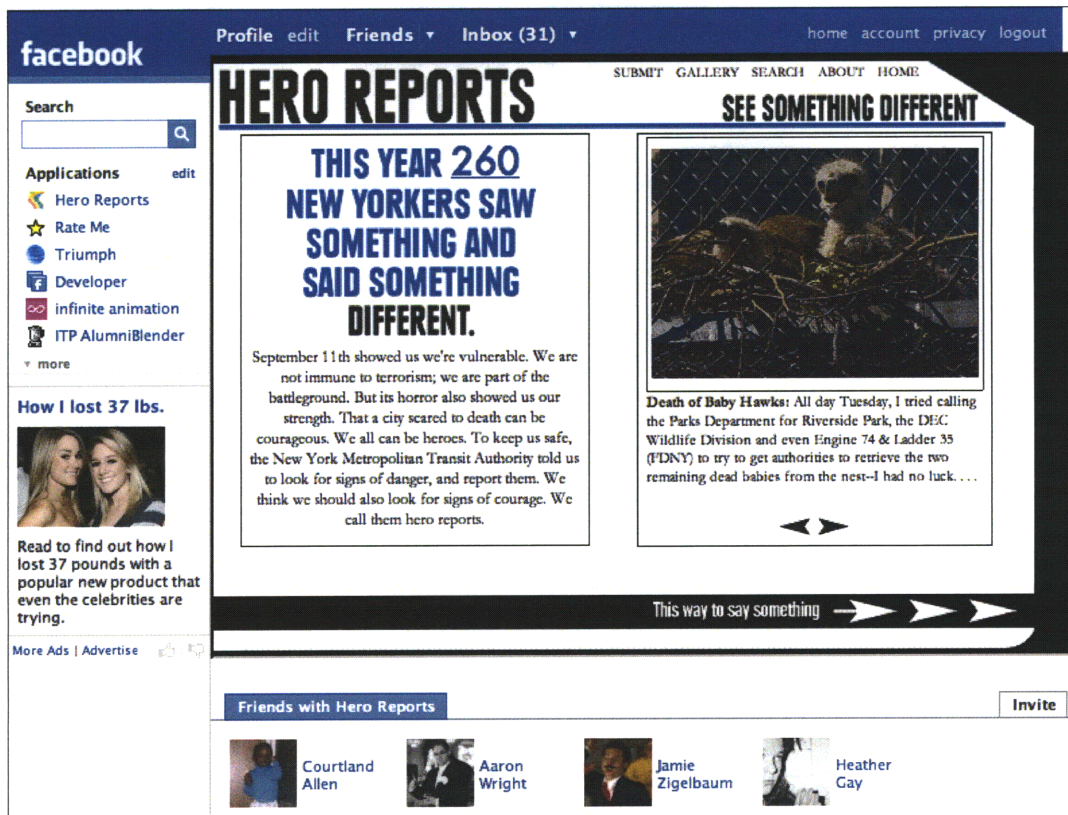
E-MAIL

Reports can be e-mailed to the help desk of Hero Reports <help@hero-reports.org>. Such reports are reviewed and then added to the database with corresponding tags, title, etc. While e-mail is not automatically posted to the database, it so far has proven to be the preferred ways of submitting reports. The e-mail address is available on site and is included in most distribution materials.

FACEBOOK APPLICATION

A Hero Reports Facebook application (Figure 3) combines social networking aspects of Facebook with the functionality of the Hero Reports web site. Users must have a Facebook account and add the Hero Reports application to participate. Social networking aspects include

searches for the contacts with the most reports, the contacts with the latest reports, discussion forums and invitations to the Hero Reports network. The initial incident form, entitled “Basic” (Figure 4), is a scaled-down version of the original, with only “title,” “incident” and “location” fields. An “advanced option” links to a replica of the original form, with the additional fields outlined above. E-mail announcements are also being developed.



4-3: Home Page of the Facebook Application

INTERVIEWS


Efforts have been made to record audio and video reports by way of interview. These reports are either a retelling of a known story or one disclosed during on-the-street solicitation (Figure 5).

[SUBMIT](#)
[GALLERY](#)
[SEARCH](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[HOME](#)

HERO REPORTS

MAKE THE "GOOD CALL"

Fill out the incident form below:

For Advanced Options click here: 

TITLE

INCIDENT

CROSS STREET

PREVIEW

SUBMIT

This way to say something

→ → →

4-4 Basic Report form for Facebook Application.



4-5 Interview with construction worker Salem Shahed in Park Slope, Brooklyn. (Photo Courtesy of Pimpila Thanaporn)

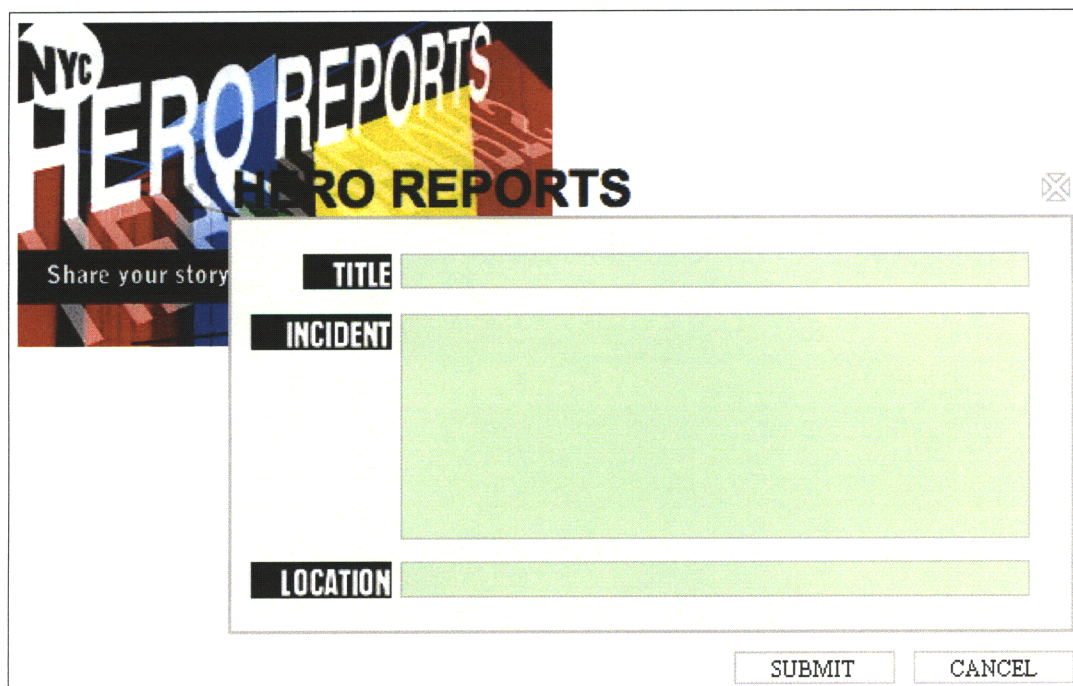
web site, in both audio and written form. Recorded reports through the interview process described above, can also be aired on *The Take Away*. General comments and feedback are also recorded. Plans are in place for requesting reports around certain crisis incidents, as well as calling in reports as tips for further investigation.

PHONE CALL

A Skype account, as well as a toll-free number allows people to call in reports. Skype calls are limited to 15 minutes and are conducted in an interview format. The toll-free calls are not conversations, but rather recordings with a time limit of 80 seconds. Callers can phone the toll-free number more than once to leave a longer report. Toll-free recordings are transcribed to e-mail by Spinvox. As no specific instructions are provided during phone recordings, the toll-free number also serves as a feedback forum.

WEB WIDGET

An embeddable module, the web widget (Figure 8) opens a Basic Hero Reports submission form in a third-party site. This reusable module is built in Java Script and requires no additional compilation by participating sites.



The image shows a web widget for 'NYC HERO REPORTS'. On the left is a Metrocard-shaped placeholder with the text 'Share your story'. On the right is a draggable basic Report Form. The form has three input fields: 'TITLE', 'INCIDENT', and 'LOCATION'. At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: 'SUBMIT' and 'CANCEL'.

4-8 Embeddable widget is a Javascript placeholder in the shape of a Metrocard (left). The a draggable basic Report Form (right) appears with a mouseclick on the Metrocard area.

BACKLINKS

Already written articles can be forwarded for inclusion in the Hero Reports network. Such reports are included at the discretion of the administrators, and can serve as existing report verification. For example, a report from June 24, 2008, of a baby born on the East Broadway subway platform includes links and copy from local news coverage. News outlets, personal blogs and photoblogs have been solicited for backlinking.

FLICKR GROUP

A Flickr group supports an open conversation about Hero Reports. Images can be submitted as reports, with required incident details and location in the Flickr description fields. Additionally, images can be

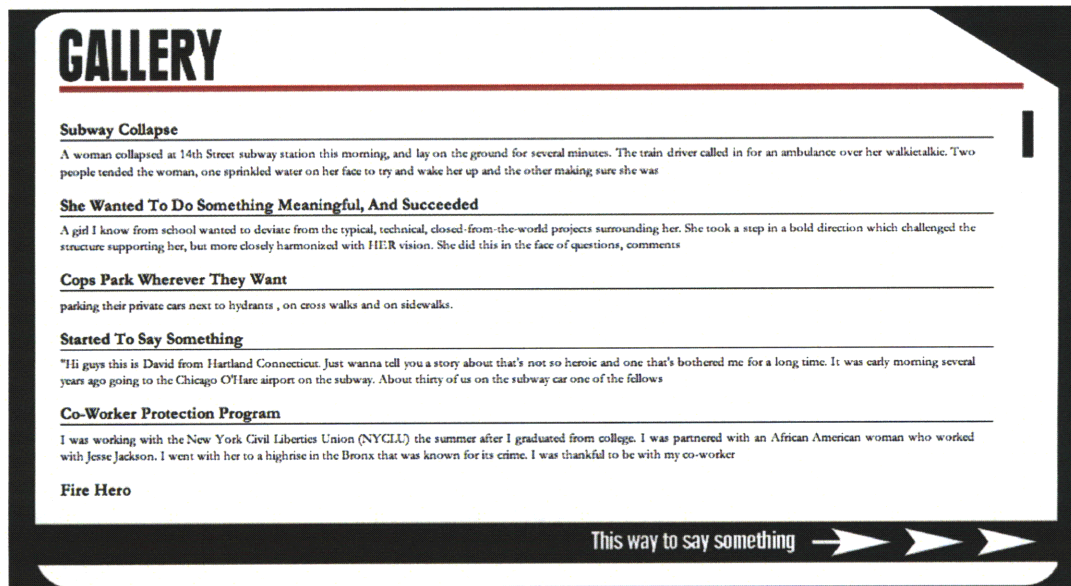


4-9 Hero Reports Flickr group allows for a visual conversation of Hero Report stories and themes. Above a New Yorker cartoon about a hero ready to save the day from the onslaughts of life (e.g., sighs).

submitted to accompany an existing report. For instance, a Flickr photograph complements a report about sharing a taxi on a rainy day. Besides reports, group members upload images that expand upon Hero Reports themes, including citizen-detective, fear of strangers and heroism (Figure 9).

4.2 OUTPUT

In accordance with input design, the display of reports appeals to a broad demographic, irrespective of technological preference. Directed towards reporters as well as a general audience, stories are broadcast in image, text, print and audio. The specifics of Hero Reports' output system are outlined below. At a minimum, the first iteration of each output is complete; all will continue in live development.

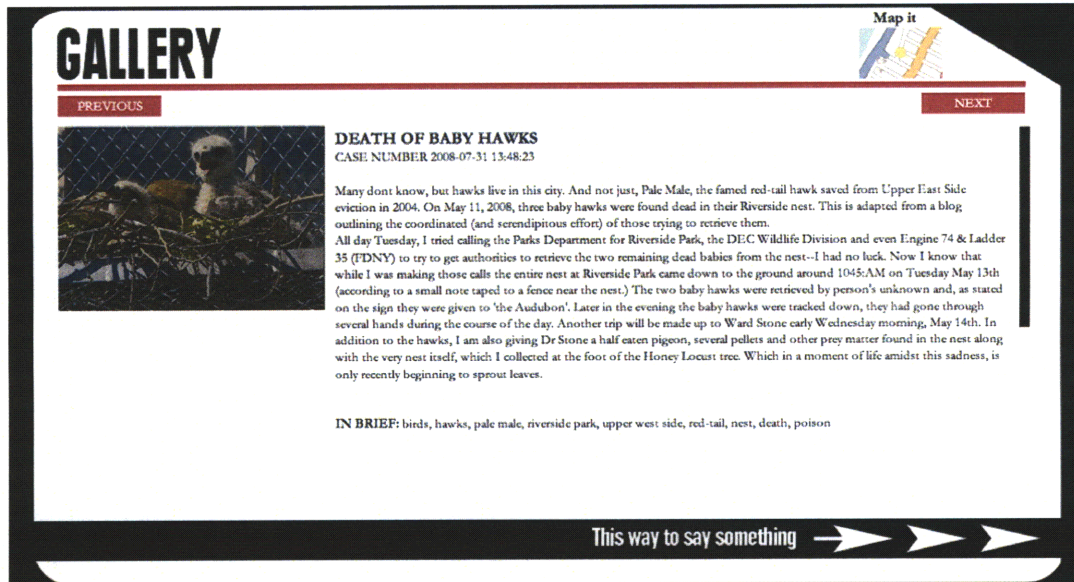


4-10 Gallery List

WEB SITE

Hero report attributes, including format, kind and location, are used to display reports on the web site in the following ways: An arm of the web site architecture is dedicated to the gallery pages. The top level 'Gallery' links a running list of reports, organized in descending date order (Figure 10).

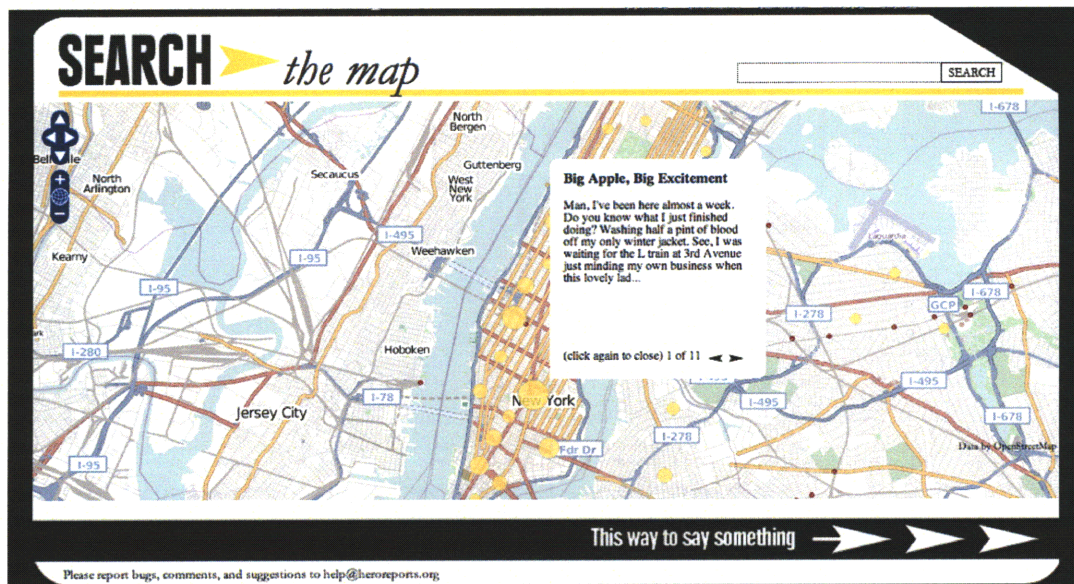
The list shows report titles and the first 200 words of an incident description. Titles link to an individual gallery page (Figure 11), with display of case number and report details (i.e., title, incident description,



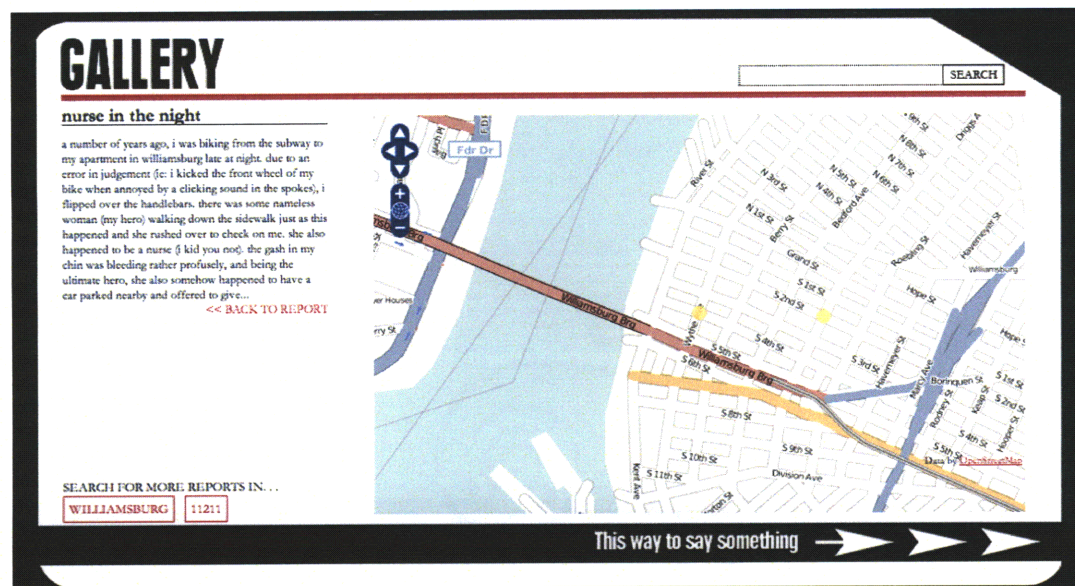
4-11 Individual Gallery Page

tag words, location, comments, category and format). An image link at the header and a text link at the bottom reference a mapped display of the report.

The Hero Map is a major aspect of Hero Reports, both conceptually and functionally, and is linked from three of the top-level pages—home, gallery, and search. Built with OpenLayers, an open source Java Script library for GPS data, the map pages display reports at two levels of



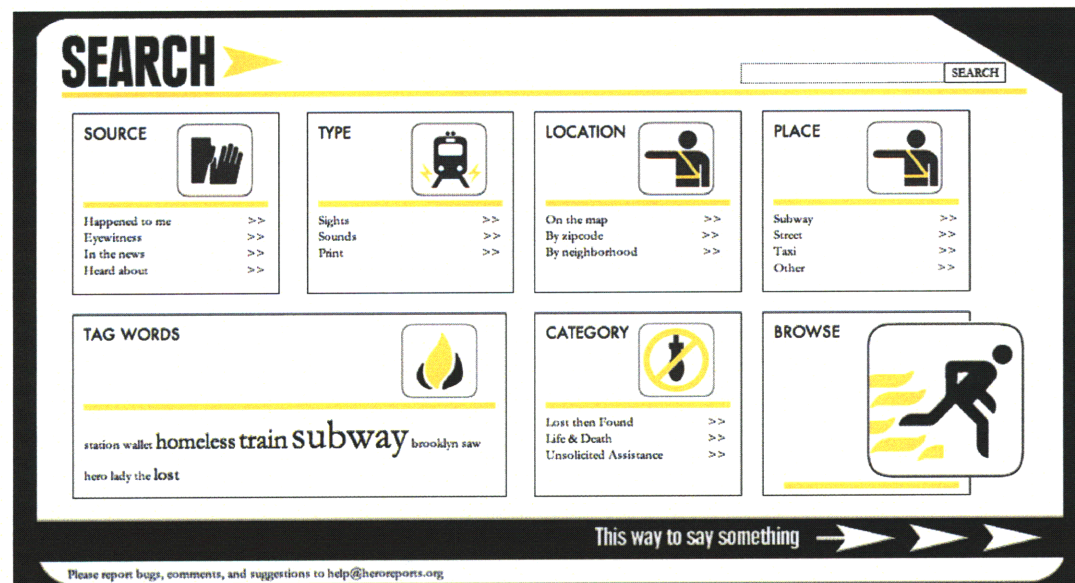
4-12 Main Map Page



4-13 Map Street View

specificity. The main map page (Figure 12) shows a street view of New York City, centered over Manhattan, with marker size proportional to number of reports.

When pressed, markers display a click through pop-up of abbreviated reports. Pop-up titles link to individual gallery pages. Alternatively, Hero Maps linked from gallery pages (Figure 13) display reports from a neighborhood view. These Hero Maps include links to reports from



4-14 Main Search Page

nearby zip codes and neighborhoods.

In addition to chronological and geographic display, Hero Reports can be browsed across theme and format (Figure 14). These organizing themes reflect the attributes of inputted reports. Sorting can be done through typed in searches, as well as predefined attributes. Report attributes group by perspective—from the reporter point-of-view and from viewpoint of collective content. Both perspectives answer the questions *How*, *What* and *Where*.

From an individual perspective:

- How did you come across this report?
 - Attribute: *source*
 - Options: *happened to me, in the news, overheard* and *eyewitness*.
- Where did the report occur?
 - Attribute: *place*
 - Options: *subway, street, taxi* and *other*.
- What is the nature of the report content?
 - Attribute: *category*
 - Options: *lost then found, unsolicited assistance, life & death* and *other*.

Regarding the reports as a collective, the attributes answer:

- How was report submitted?
 - Attribute: *type*
 - Options: *sights*, which includes reports with photos; *text*, which includes reports as written stories; and *audio*, which includes reports recorded as a sound file.
- Where is the report on the map?
 - Attribute: *location*
 - Options: *map, neighborhood* and *zip code*.
- What are the recurring words from report contents.
 - Attribute: *tag words*
 - Options are dynamic.



4-15 Detail of the Hero Reports Facebook application menu which allows for social networking and hero report submission.

E-MAIL

A plain text newsletter mails every two weeks to Hero Reports subscribers. The e-mail newsletter follows the style of a crime blotter, with featured reports as well as current news announcements.

FACEBOOK APPLICATION

For the Facebook application, display functionality follows the main Hero Reports web site, with all map, gallery and search options. Additional features include the display of the reporter network (Figure 15), with corresponding report searches by reporter activity.

RADIO BROADCAST

Once a week, a sample of audio reports air on Public Radio International/WNYC's *The Take Away*. These reports are short (<1:20min) descriptions from a national audience base. Transcriptions of these reports are included on both *The Take Away* and Hero Reports web site. Display and listening of radio broadcasts are the same as general audio reports.

BACKLINKS

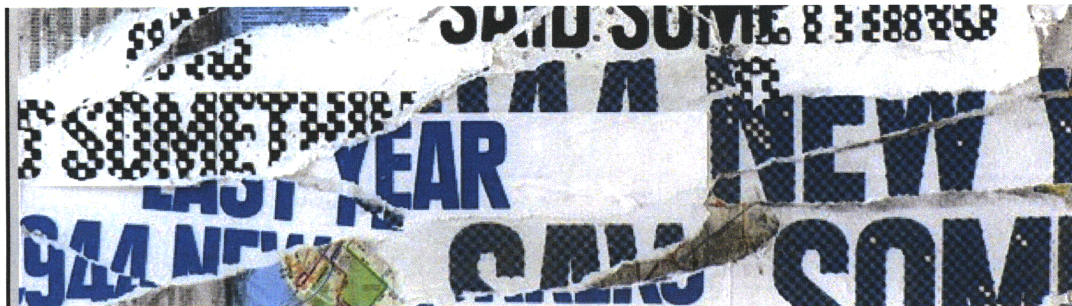
In balance to the input of previously published stories, submitted reports can link back to outside sites. Links from Hero Reports connect to the Hero Map of the report. This partnership allows third-party stories to be placed in geographic and thematic context.

FLICKR GROUP

The display of photos, along with notes and comments follow Flickr guidelines. Links to the main the Hero Reports site, as well as individual gallery pages are included when relevant. This is edited by the group administrators, and outlined in the group rules.

PRINTED BOOK

A curated book, to be presented to city authorities, is being designed with the 8A Collective. This book will display at least 1,944 reports, with comments, photos and design (Figure 16) added as illustration.



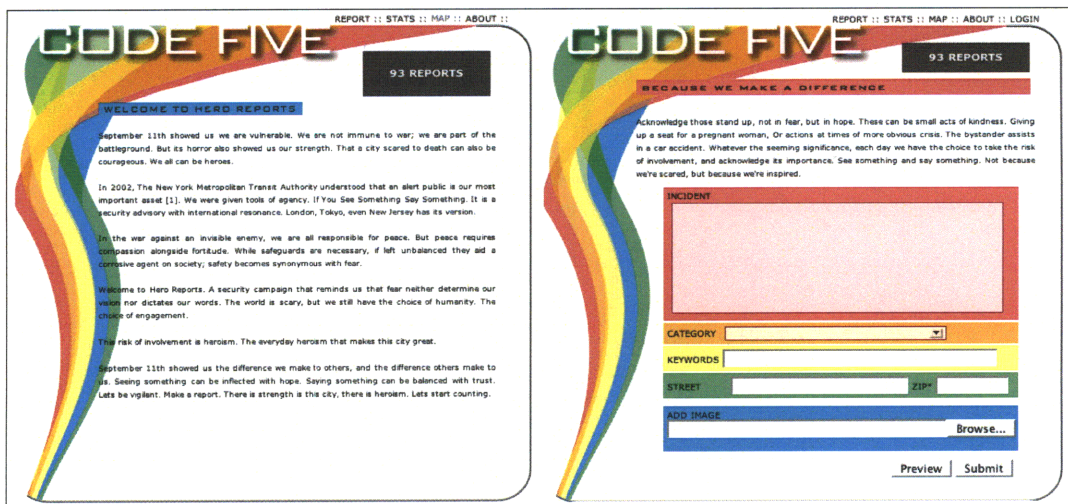
4-16 Possible Collage for the Printed Materials of Hero Reports. Courtesy of 8A Collective.

4.3 DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Considering the importance of visual presentation, a brief discussion of Hero Reports' design motivations follows. General guidelines succeed a brief outline of design milestones.

4.3.1 SKETCHES

An initial design, entitled CodeFive (Figure 17), combined Homeland Security Color Alerts with Charlie's Angels femininity. The architecture of the site differed, with its social networking aspect now exclusively within Facebook. At this point, the project was renamed Hero Reports. The square frame of CodeFive and the extensive left-hand embellishment restricted the dynamics and flexible nature of the report content. As such, a new series aligned more blog aesthetics. The first in this vein followed a blog sensibility, with white background and gray text. A banner from this iteration was placed on the Media Lab home page.

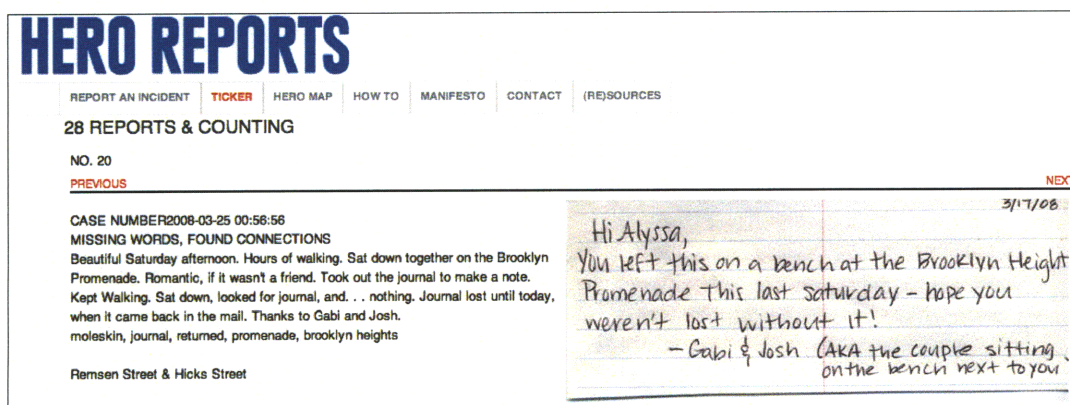


4-17 Two pages-About (left) and Report Form (right) of the first design iteration, entitled Code Five.

(Figure 18). A final design shift occurred in preparation for Hero Reports Sponsor Week. This iteration used a three-column front page and black backgrounds (Figure 19). A white bookplate aesthetic was used for the gallery. Informal user testing indicated that the unbounded content on the general pages combined with the black backgrounds made the stories difficult to read.



4-18a Media Lab Banner



4-18b Two gallery pages of the second design iteration.

SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING

Title

Incident*

Keywords

Cross Street*

Add Image no file selected

Comments

TERMS CREATIVE COMMONS HELP SURVEY

15 REPORTS & COUNTING

LOST IN NEW YORK

PUPPY BOMB SQUAD

TAKING OUT THE TRASH

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

THANKS FOR SMOKING

WHISTLING DOG

OLD FASHIONED MANNERS

NOT ENOUGH MONEY TO STEAL

MISSING WORDS, FOUND CONNECTIONS

CONCERNED CONDUCTOR

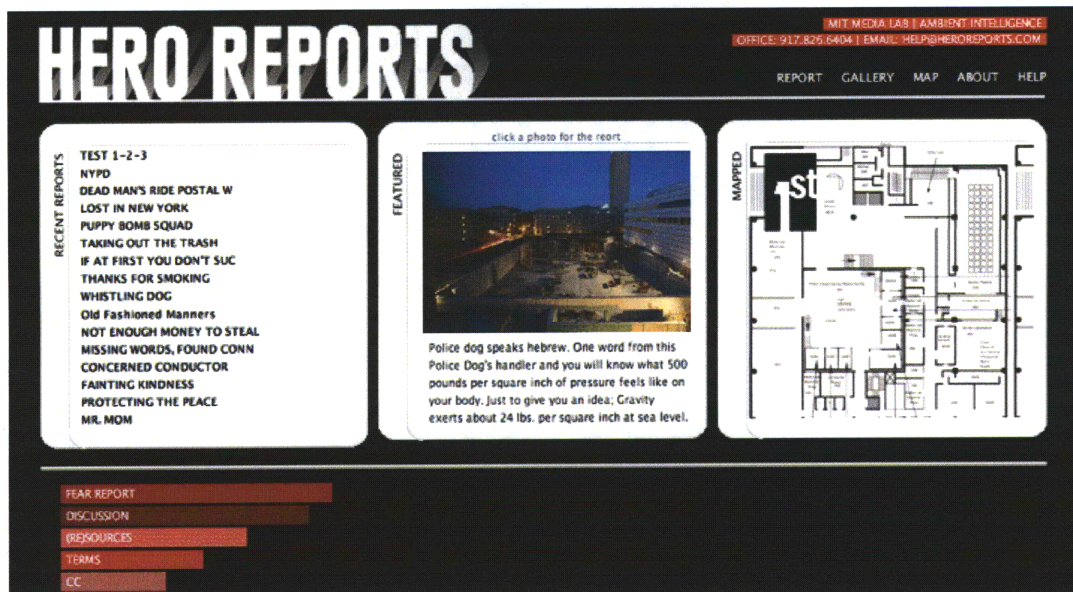
FAINTING KINDNESS

PROTECTING THE PEACE

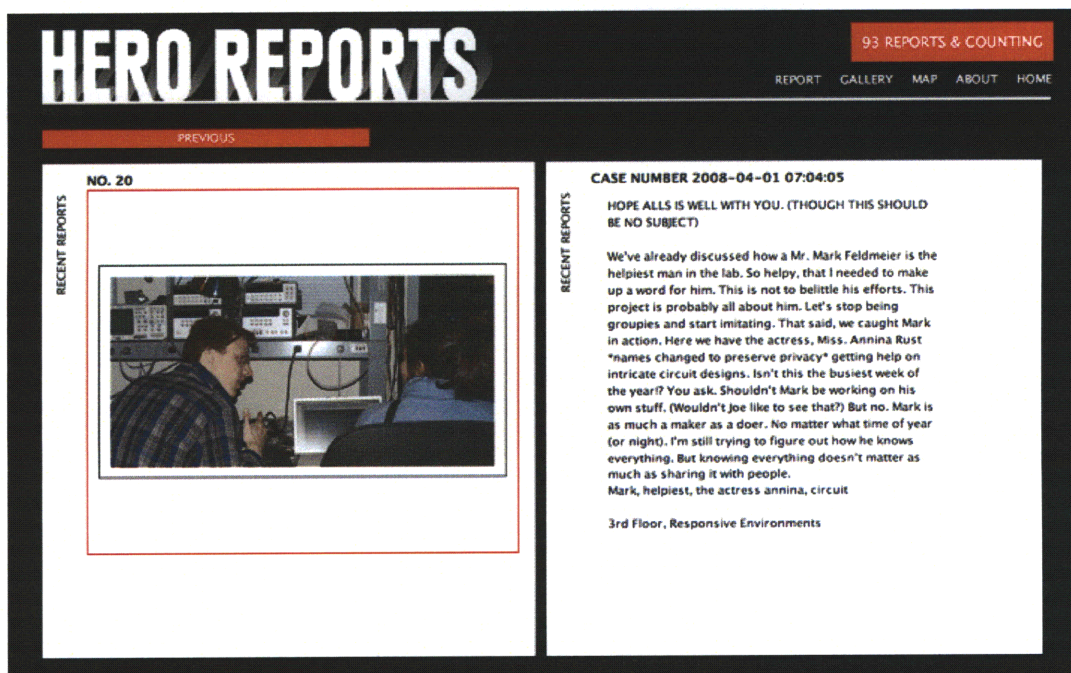
MR. MOM

PRETTY IN PINK

4-18c Report Form from the second design iteration.



4-19a Third iteration 3-column homepage.



4-19b Individual Gallery Page.



4-19c Third Design Iteration-Map Page

4.3.2 DESIGN PRIORITIES

Hero Reports is inspired by the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) public-awareness campaign, "If You See Something, Say Something." Advertisement posters, in both English and Spanish, are now omnipresent on subways, commuter rails and buses throughout the New York metropolitan region. As Hero Reports is also a public security campaign, its visual design attempts to follow the aesthetics of the MTA.

It warrants mention that New York City closely identifies with its subway system. As historian Irma Watkins-Owens writes, "No other public space figures so prominently in the daily lives of its residents. Some writers have characterized the New York subway as a metaphor for the city itself. Like the city that never sleeps, New York's subway operates 24 hours a day on 842 miles of track . . . Taking the train to your destination remains the quintessential New York experience. The subway is first and foremost a cultural space and one of the most diverse shared spaces anywhere."

Local media cover subway activity with the normalcy of weather reports, the humor of sports broadcasting and the camp of gossip columns. Indeed, the subway is not just about transportation; its status in popular culture reaches mythical proportion. Hundreds of artists use the subway for guerilla satire, platform performance and public installation. From "The Odd Couple" to "Sesame Street," the subway plays a prominent role in a variety of television shows. A beauty queen, Ms. Subways, adds a "little glamour" to the sometimes dreary rides. Since 1928, a baseball match between the two New York teams has carried the name "Subway Series." The MTA Transit Museum regularly displays train "artifacts" including heritage signs and dioramas of equipment. Subway memorabilia from snow globes to shower curtains commemorate its existence. Numerous activist groups fight for straphanger rights, while MTA trademarks win legal battles. And its safety posters, from evacuation information to rules of conduct, have a possible lifespan of decades. As such, many of the design references outlined below might be familiar to New York City subway travelers but unfamiliar to those from other places. The design of Hero Reports works on its own, but may hold multiple meanings for a New Yorker.

METROCARD

The frame of the web site is in the shape of a Metrocard (Figure 20). Additionally, one of the Hero Reports logos used for print materials follows train-shaped typography of the word “Metrocard”



4-20 The layout of the Hero Reports site (right) follows the design of the MTA Metrocard (left)

FONT

All “titles” within Hero Reports are in the official MTA font— Plak™ Com Black. Similar to Futura, Plak is a sans serif design. But its unique qualities include its heaviness, and its non-geometric lowercase ‘a.’ Titles in Plak™ include the Hero Report logo, all web site headers, labels on the report page and the postcard design. The content font—Adobe Garamond—also follows the MTA typeface. Garamond is a old-style serif font with fluid and consistent letter forms.

SLOGANS

All headings on the site, and certain terminology in the content, are built around MTA public-awareness campaigns. In itself, the “See something, Say Something” campaign includes more than forty posters, with similar but varying phrasing. An example of a confluence of phrasing is on the report page which reads, “Make the good call.” This is an interpretation of the 2004 “See Something” campaign which reads, “Good Call.”

The most appropriated language of Hero Reports is the phrase “If You See Something, Say Something.” An example is the revision of the 2006 campaign, “Last Year, 1,944 New Yorkers Saw Something and Said Something” (Figure 21). When the viewer arrives at the home page, the first column reads “This Year, _____ New Yorkers Saw Something and Said Something DIFFERENT.” The _____ being the current tally of Hero Reports.

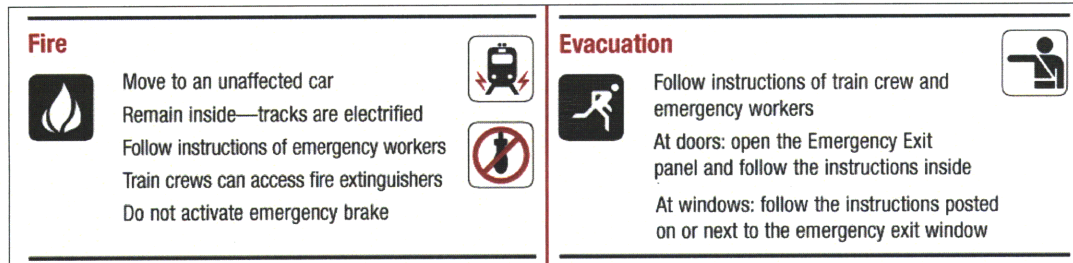
The appropriation of “See Something, Say Something” terminology includes security instructions: “If you seen a suspicious package or activity on the platform or train, don’t keep it to yourself. Tell a cop, an MTA employee, or call us toll-free at 1-800-NYC-SAFE.” An appropriation of this phrase includes calls on the print materials reading, “If you see an heroic activity, don’t keep it to yourself. Tell us.”



4-21 The 1,944 campaign (left) and the reappropriation (right)

EVACUATION ICONS

Adaptations from MTA train evacuation materials accompany the Search sections, with additional buttons on the Report and About pages following similar iconography.



4-22 Iconography from the MTA Evacuation Safety Instructions



4-21 Hero Reports buttons based on subway evacuation icon

NUMBER

As noted above, the 2006 anti-terror campaign listed 1,944 New Yorkers as saying something. With transparency, Hero Reports keeps a ticker of reports, with 1,944 selected stories for presentation to city officials.

COLORS

The color swatch used throughout Hero Reports adheres to MTA publications. The yellow and blues are direct references to the “See Something, Say Something” campaign. The red is from the evacuation material, and the green is a swatch from the student metrocard.

1980'S HEROISM

The flat features framed by a bold black background refer to 1980s heroism, from GI Joe to the “Just Say No” anti-drug campaigns.

5. DISCUSSION

Hero Reports attempts to give the heroic moment a collective memory, and in turn civic and economic weight. An heroic moment, particularly an everyday heroism, often has a very narrow frame. These moments are not connected with each other, but appear as disconnected blips on the radar. When they do appear, the attention is on the self and the individual. What did it take for said person to take that risk? Would I do the same? This focus on the individual stops the heroic moment from gaining a larger perspective and cultural impact. By aggregating and mapping, we give the heroic moment memory. This memory can be placed back onto a community, a cultural bias and a neighborhood. An everyday moment of courage transforms into civic courage.

The term “hero” then, is a deliberate choice. Contemporary definitions for heroism are designed to fall beyond the reach of ordinary people. The firefighter is the hero. Iron Man is the hero. Because these *extraordinary* people are so enthralling, the ordinary person does not need to be heroic. Under these strategies, where heroism requires training, power or magic, the ordinary person needs to be saved. Someone else, better trained, more equipped, in short, not me, not my responsibility—will help in the accident, put out the fire, return the wallet.

Our cultural norms set up anonymous engagement as loss rather than as gain. Misinterpretations of equity (e.g., should I help the blind man across the street, or will I be offending him?), legal liability³, diffusion of responsibility (e.g., Kitty Genovese⁴), and personal technologies (e.g., the iPod⁵) create protections *against* involvement. In the face of all these structures, Hero Reports proposes protection *for* involvement. As a technology about *us*, rather than *me*, Hero Reports allows the collective to reclaim and redefine a word we can all share—heroism.

³ In U.S. common law, there is no general duty to come to the rescue of another. Generally, a person cannot be held liable for not assisting while another person is in peril. However, such a duty may arise in two situations: 1) when a person creates a hazardous situation and another falls into peril, the former is responsible for the latter, and 2) the nature of the relationship (e.g., parents and children) warrants protection. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duty_to_rescue

⁴ Kitty Genovese, was a New York City woman who was stabbed to death near her home in Queens, New York. The circumstances of her murder and the supposed lack of reaction of numerous neighbors were reported by a newspaper article published two weeks later; the common portrayal of neighbors being fully aware, but completely non-responsive has later been criticized as inaccurate. Nonetheless, it prompted investigation into the social psychological phenomenon that has become known as the bystander effect (seldomly: “Genovese syndrome”) and especially diffusion of responsibility. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitty_Genovese

⁵ Noah Vawter in his MS Thesis *Ambient Addition: How to Turn Urban Noise into Music* argues that technologies like the iPod isolate wearers from their environments.

The following chapter discusses the success of this goal in four parts. Part 1 *The Reports*, presents Hero Reports' content, including sample stories and distribution of categories. Part 2 *The City* reviews Hero Reports' content in relation to urban safety and real-estate concerns. Part 3 *The Dialog* describes recurring topics of discussion in feedback forums. And, Part 4 *Network*, outlines the current Hero Reports community of among others, journalists, bloggers, artists and educators.

5.1 THE REPORTS

The heart of Hero Reports is the stories. Example reports organized by category precede a general evaluation of category distribution.

5.1.1 EXAMPLE REPORTS

The scope of content, length and writing style makes it difficult to present representative hero reports. Even a seemingly insignificant story begins to carry different weight in the context of others. The following provides sample reports from each of the four categories—*acknowledgements*, *life & death*, *lost then found*, and *unsolicited assistance*.

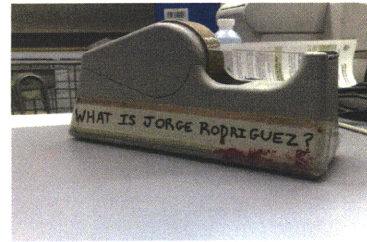
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: WHAT IS JORGE RODRIGUEZ?

There is a special USPS in Manhattan. It is the 4th Ave and 11th Street post office. This post office is amazing for several reasons, the foremost being the person who assists those customers waiting in the long, long lines; handing you the necessary pen or form to facilitate the transaction. The second, is Jorge Rodriguez. I was paying for my postage when I noticed a sign taped to a tape dispenser, next to the mail clerk. It read, “What is Jorge Rodriguez?” (Figure 1). I asked the clerk what the sign was about and he said, “What we had, that was a postal transaction... but if you had had that man (and he points to the clerk 2 booths down)... it would have been a postal experience. That is Jorge Rodriguez and its been years and we are still trying to figure his magic out.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: WHAT IS JORGE RODRIGUEZ? PART 2

The following transcript by a postal worker at the 4th Avenue and 11th Street Post Office echoes the claims of an earlier story: What is Jorge Rodriguez? At the time of interview, the Hero Reporter was neither familiar with the author nor aware of the content of the previous post.

“When you come to Cooper Station, right? The rest of us clerks, you just get a postal transaction. When you go to Jorge Rodriguez you get the postal experience. Because, you see, this is why this says, “What is Jorge Rodriguez?” He’s not human. He’s too nice to be human. He is the one who taught me that the key to life is being nice and slow. And he’s a hero. I mean, the guy’s an American hero. Came here from Colombia. Military. Do you know that three of his kids graduated Juilliard, Columbia and Duke University? The immigrant American dream. That’s heroism to me. End of story.”



5-1 Sign on the 4th Avenue and 11th Street Post Office for Hero Report: *What is Jorge Rodriguez?* 2008. Source: Author.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY

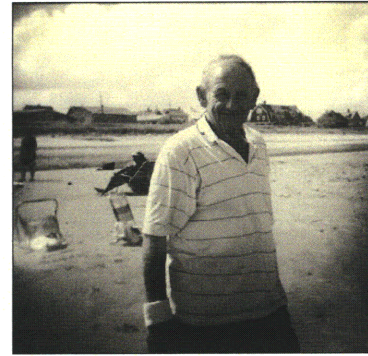
I will never forget that day. It may not have been particularly special or interesting. There was no major heat wave or blizzard, no natural disasters, and I was not caught in the middle of a raging battle in upstate New York. And yet my life was changed. I saw myself in a whole new way. I appreciated my life more, cliché as it may sound - all because I went to the bakery. Yes, the bakery. The little shop with bagels and coffee and milk and pastries. But modern and fascinating as it was with its cyber café, Cohen's Bakery did not change my life (no matter how good the black-and-white cookies are), rather a couple I saw there did.

I was accompanying my friend to get a latte. An older couple stood in front of us in line, and I happened to overhear their order. The woman asked for six onion bagels and two coffees, but this order did not change my life. As the man, wearing a striped shirt with rolled-up sleeves, khakis, and a white cap covering his sparse white hair, reached out to take the box of bagels, that was the moment that changed me.

As his sleeve pulled up, a tattoo became visible. I saw the letter J followed by five numbers. They were not clear and had been fading since the end of the Holocaust. His skin had long since wrinkled. I did not stare; I looked at the man's face instead. I wanted to talk to him. I wanted to hear about his experiences. But seeing him with his redheaded, sundress-clad wife doing an everyday task like buying bagels in a bakery stopped me.

He'd moved on, and who was I to bring back horrible memories because of my curiosity? This man did not need my pity, but I will always regret not talking to him even though I know this was the right thing to do.

You might think that it's ridiculous that I was so deeply affected by a man I never even spoke to. But seeing those numbers made me appreciate his ability to move on. He had lived through the worst massacre the world has ever known, and he was able to rise from all the death and pain. He was a martyr, but he found a normal life. And for that, I commend him. He is my hero, even though I don't even know his name.



5-2 Holocaust survivor, Coney Island, Brooklyn, NY 2008. Source: Karassellos/Flickr.

LIFE & DEATH: PROUD OF YOU ALL

On May 1, at about 7:15 p.m., my parents and I were traveling down Bay Parkway when a minor car accident took place in the lane beside us between 85th Street and 86th Street. The driver of the car in front must have been startled by the bump from behind though, and jumped the curb, taking down the street sign and stopping just at the wall of the Commerce Bank on the corner.

Although the accident occurred at a relatively slow speed and no one from either car was injured, my father pulled over to help. As he approached the car, he was the first to realize that there was someone trapped beneath it. No one had noticed the elderly man, who was struck and pinned underneath a front tire. Within seconds, a group of about 20 men gathered around the vehicle and lifted it off of the man. I and countless others immediately dialed 911 and NYPD, FDNY and EMS workers arrived within minutes.

The man was severely injured, but awake, and I would be grateful for any information about how he is doing. I was truly impressed by how quickly emergency workers arrived and the number of people who chose to get involved and dial 911. I was especially impressed by those 20, or so, men who gathered to lift the car, and it is to them that I would like to express my sincerest appreciation and respect for jumping in and responding quickly and selflessly, without a second thought. While it is difficult to get over seeing someone so badly injured, you have made me even more proud to call myself a member of this community. - Annette Scaduto Gravesend

LIFE & DEATH: WOMAN GIVES BIRTH ON F TRAIN PLATFORM

A baby girl named Soleil - French for sun - lit up a Manhattan subway station with joy Monday. The little bit of heaven - 6 pounds, 7 ounces and 15 inches from head to toe - was born on the East Broadway F train platform with the help of more than a dozen concerned New Yorkers.

"We were going to Bellevue Hospital," said an ecstatic Max, "but we didn't make it. My wife started feeling funny on the train so I told the conductor and he called ahead to the station." "When we pulled in I put her down on the platform and her water broke. I was happy the baby was coming, but I have to admit I was a little bit scared."



5-3 Birth of Soleil on East Broadway subway station platform 2008. Source: Standora/NY Daily News.

Here's where those not-so-cold-hearted cold-hearted New Yorkers came in. A nurse on her way to work also got off the train and began comforting Francine. A businessman put his briefcase under her head as a pillow. One man ran up to the street to guide paramedics and firemen to Francine. Several others gave up articles of clothing for her to rest on.

"At least four trains came into the station and it seemed like people from every one of them stopped to help," said social worker Wendy Brown, 44 from the Bronx who held Francine's hand and reminded her how to breathe. "It was amazing. You can't tell me New Yorkers don't care," said Brown.

Paramedics arrived just as the baby was crowning and completed the delivery. Straphangers smiled and a few clapped politely as they left. Monday night at Bellevue, Max said his wife and daughter were "just perfect." "Thank you, everybody," he said.

LOST THEN FOUND: LOST WALLET RETURNED

I dropped my wallet this morning near the subway station as I was rushing to school. This man saw it, prevented someone else from taking it into their possession, and tried to return it to me. But, I was running to the station and he couldn't keep up with me. So he went around my neighborhood to see if he could return it to where I lived. My grandfather didn't understand English, so this attempt to return my wallet also failed. He ended up returning the wallet to me after he got off work, which he was late for in the morning because he was trying to return the wallet in the first place.

LOST THEN FOUND: ALL HIS WORLDLY POSSESSIONS

I was riding on the 1st Avenue bus uptown on a summer's evening rush hour when a police car with lights and siren blaring was after someone on the road. After many blocks of this, it finally dawned on the bus driver that the police car was wailing at him to stop the bus. The bus pulled over at an unmarked bus stop and two policemen and a man who seemed very distraught got out of the cop car and came up to the bus door. The policeman explained that this man had been on the bus and exited forgetting his bags and asked that the man be permitted to board the bus to look for his belongings. The man did, found his two paper bags in the back of the bus with his life's belongings in tact and departed the bus. The man was elderly and apparently homeless. I have lived

on the upper east side for over 30 years and this act of human kindness and charity from these two police officers I will never forget. Nor will I forget the look of despair and relief in this mans' eyes.

UNSOLICITED ASSISTANCE: UNINTENTIONAL MOONING

This is a bit like broccoli in your teeth, but a little bit worse. I was walking down Broadway, when someone taps me on the shoulder. Rather embarrassedly, he says: "you're skirt is, uh, stuck. It's uh, up your. . .". I got the idea. Made quick adjustments. Thanked the crimson face, and wondered how many I had mooned. Really? How many.

UNSOLICITED ASSISTANCE: PAPERWORK EXPLOSION

I was going home after a day of teaching at and attending NYU as a grad student. While standing on the platform waiting for the train, the bag I was carrying 40+ student papers gave out and dropped all my students' work on the ground. I was trying to grab them all, making sure no loose papers were getting misplaced, and stuff them into my bag, I wonderful woman knelt down next to me and produced a large, sturdy bag for me to use. She was so kind when I thanked her and offered to give the bag back after the train arrived and I could get settled. No, no she said, I needed it more than she did. I was taken aback by her desire to get involved with my relatively minor problem and felt the common humanity of being a New Yorker - we are all in "it" - living in the city - together. While we may be busy and absorbed with our own lives, we do look out for and take care of each other.

5.1.2 CATEGORY IN SOURCE, PLACE AND LOCATION

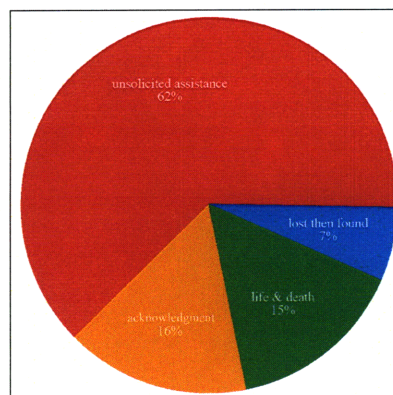
Reports are organized into four categories—*acknowledgements*, *life & death*, *lost then found*, and *unsolicited assistance*. In a review of 260 reports (Table 1) *unsolicited assistance* accounted for more than 60% of all incident reports, while *acknowledgements* and *life & death* balance 30%. *Lost then found* reports made up the remaining 7%.

Reports relating to homelessness, directions, nursing and animals account for most types of *unsolicited assistance*. Meanwhile, subway falls and crimes against women are most frequent *life & death* reports.

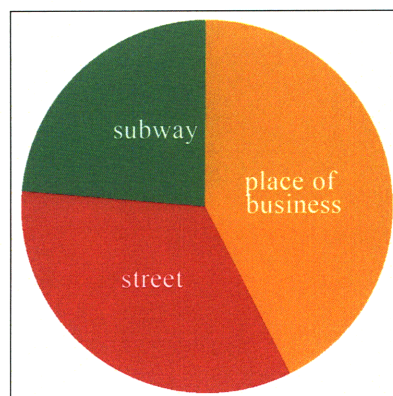
Acknowledgements are reminiscent of *Missed Connections* of Craigslist personals but with the intent of thanking, rather than seeking, a stranger. While both are abstract open-ended messages of shared moments, *missed connections* and *acknowledgements* reports differ in incident location. A statistical analysis of *missed connections* location by Gawker indicate the subway as the most frequent place of frustrated amour, while a review of Hero Reports (Table 2) points to the places of business and the street as the place for thank yous.

With outlets like Craigslist, local papers and bulletin boards for lost and found incidents, we might expect a wealth of related hero reports. The category's low numbers then might reflect participants' definitions of the word heroism. *Lost then found* ranged from the everyday missing wallet to the extraordinary missing child, with only one repeat of content—a missing diamond ring.

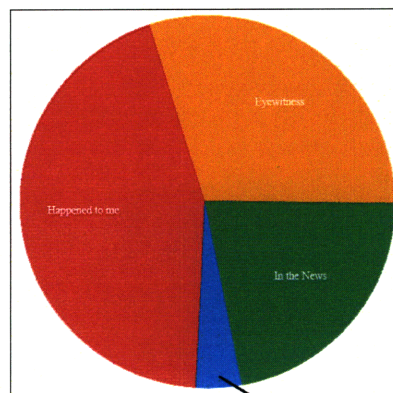
The source of report are itemized as *eyewitness*, *happened to me*, *in the news*, and *heard about*. Personal sources—*eyewitness* and *happened to me*—account for 75% of reports. *News sources* account for 21% and *heard about* for 5% (Table 3).



T-1 Category Distribution

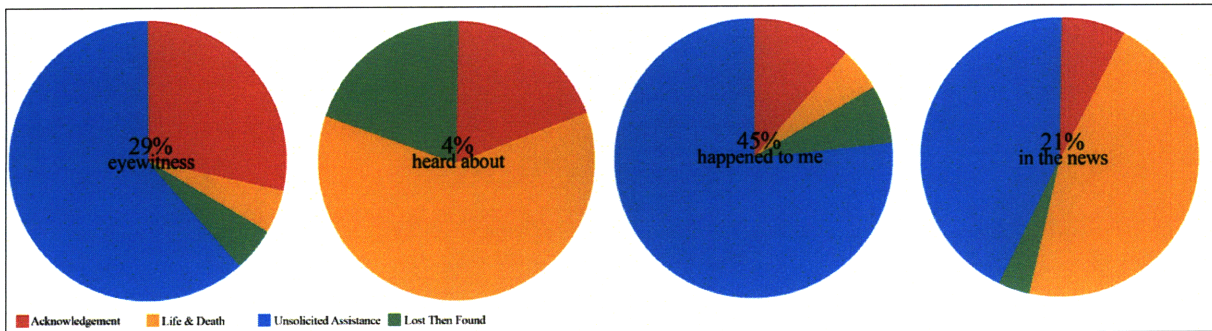


T-2 Locations of Acknowledgment Reports



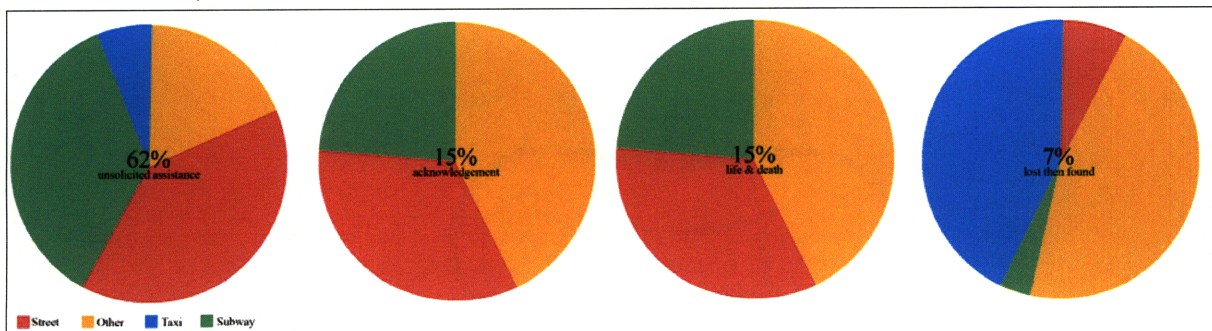
T-3 Source of Reports

As seen in Table 4-6, categories correlate with *sources*, *place* and *location*, respectively. The category *unsolicited assistance* accounts for the majority of reports from *eyewitness* and *happened to me* sources, while none account for the *overheard* source. In accordance with the magnanimity of content, *life & death* reports often came from *overheard* and *in the news* sources.

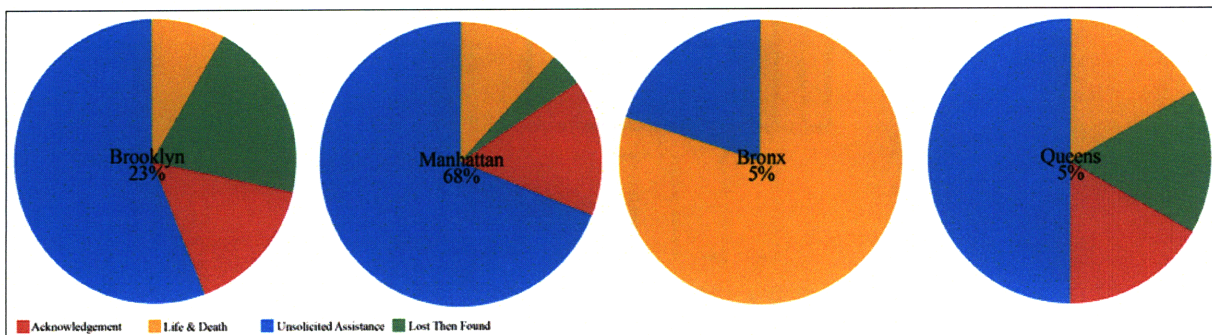


T-4 The category and source of hero reports

Of particular interest in respect to place (Table 5) is the near identical distribution of place for *acknowledgements* and *life & death* categories. Despite efforts by the MTA to establish a lost and found center (Neuman 2007) nearly half of all *lost then found* reports are in *taxis* and less than 10% in *subways*.



T-5 The category and place of hero reports



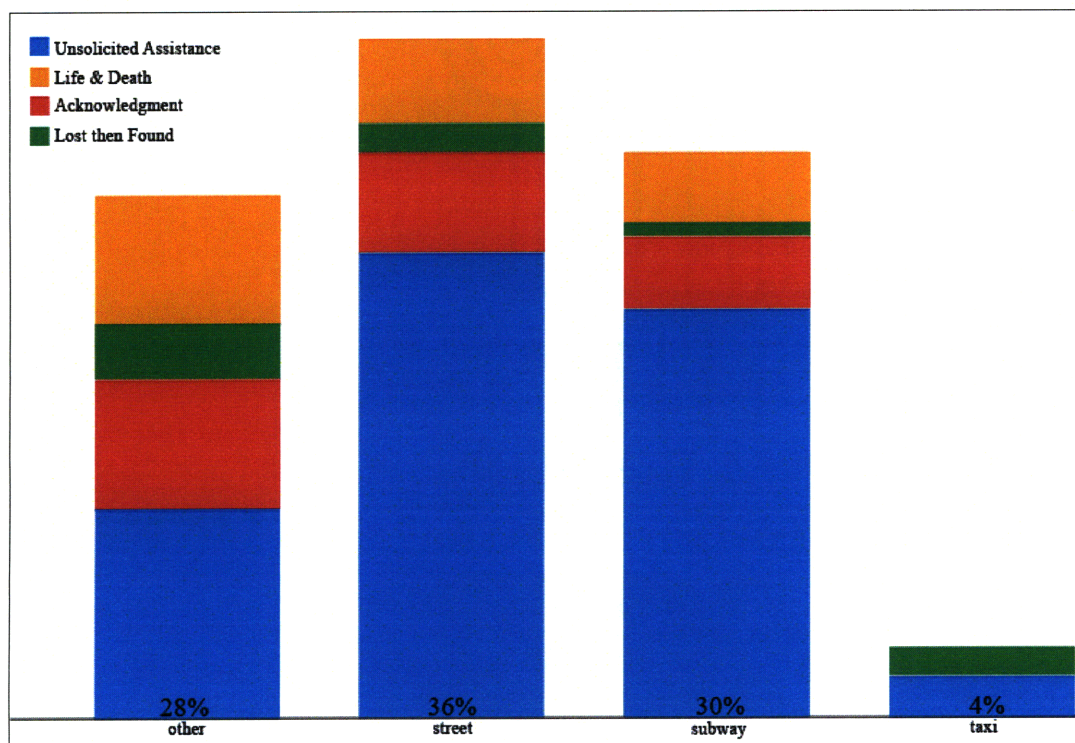
T-6 The category and location of hero reports

5.2 THE CITY

Various socio-economic factors, including safety, affect the social capital of a neighborhood. Typically researchers, citizens and policy planners alike, approach safety from a perspective of personal threat. Hero Reports proposes including everyday heroism as an additional variable for understanding safety. A comparison between New York City crime statistics and Hero Reports provides initial access in evaluating this vision of safety.

5.2.1 PLACE ATTRIBUTES

Place attributes are *street*, *subway*, *taxi* and *other*. Table 7 indicates that *street* and *subway* balance with 36% and 30% of total reports, respectively. *Taxis* identify 4% of reports while *other* occupies a significant number with 28%.



T-7 The category and place of hero reports

To understand these numbers in context, Table 8 shows a summary of current crime trends. According to the latest numbers, overall crime in New York City has dropped 26% since 2001. Since 2002, major felony crime steadily declined with annual murders below 600. In 2007, murders fell below 500 including a decrease in murders where victims do

The most frequently cited subway stations in Hero Reports were also ones with high crime rates. As noted above, the stations at 34th Street, 125th Street, West 4th Street, and 86th Street are all considered high crime stations. Table 9 shows that a majority of reports came from the neighborhoods of these stations—Midtown, Harlem, the Financial District, the West Village, and the Bronx.

As the statistics indicate, and Phillips and Smith (2006) argue, the busy choreography of these in-between spaces create opportunity for incivility and crime. One of Hero Reports' most significant findings indicate that these congested transitional spaces also present opportunities for



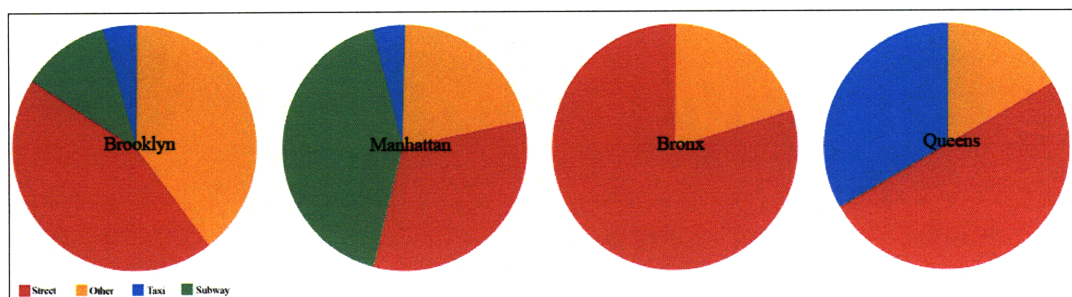
T-9 The category place location of hero reports

everyday heroism. The consequences of these results offer a reinterpretation of some of the highest crime areas of the City.

The New York City Department of Transportation is responsible for more than 13,087 taxis operating in the city. Taxi crimes are typically directed toward the driver. In fact, driving a taxi or livery van is considered one of the most dangerous jobs in New York City (Schaller and Gilbert, 1995). In this war on terror, the racial makeup of the profession brings into play another variable when evaluating taxi safety. Current prejudices, as discussed in the *Background* chapter, places Brown and Black men at greater risk of triggering reactions. With over 4 in 10 new taxi drivers born on the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, Bangladesh and

India) and many more from Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East, the typified 'taxi driver' is vulnerable to misunderstanding, ignorance and suspicion. But, how do they show up in Hero Reports?

The place *taxi* was not an initial attribute of reports; after a number of taxi based submissions, *taxi* required a category of its own. Currently, *taxi* constitutes 5% of total hero reports, one-third of Queens reports (Table 10) and almost half of the *lost then found* reports (Table 6). While taxi drivers might fit a racial profile with higher risk and



T-10 Place and location of hero reports

vulnerability, they also account for a significant number of everyday heroism. The inclusion of hero reports complicates impressions of industries with a racial bias towards Brown and Black men.

During the early 1990s, parks seemed more dangerous than the streets. Not until 2005, however, were any hard data put behind such public impression. From the city survey of 2005, Flushing Meadows Park had the highest number of reported crimes, while Prospect Park had the highest crime rate (Schwartz 2008).

Almost all on-the-street interviews were conducted in a park setting with people at leisure; however, no hero report identified *park* as the place of incident. Two submissions described incidents geographically near a park, but in a residential setting. A report near Flushing Meadows, the park with the highest number of crimes, is one of the two letters sent to Hero Reports (Figure 5). The text of this letter follows:

FIRE HERO CASE NUMBER 2008-08-10 22:22:20

I live in Queens close to Flushing Meadows Park in a basement apartment. Over the years, I got to know these two boys, Kevin and Kenneth. They are brothers who used to come up from Florida in the summer,

and lived on the 3rd Floor. They were big on the model airplane flying, which involve model airplane fuel. They ended up moving to my house and going to school here full time. Right before Christmas, a few years ago, I returned home from work and thought nothing of the boys laughing behind the closed laundry room door. Then I heard an explosion and screaming cries for help. (The fumes has built up) They had the model airplane fuel in a closed room (with a furnace) and were playing around with a lighter. The older boy was able to get a fire extinguisher, but it wasn't enough to put out the fire. We carried the younger boy (he got the worst of it) up the stairs and laid him down until the fire dept./EMS showed up. He was a real trooper. I never heard a swear word from him although he had 3rd degree burns over 90% of his body. He was lucky not to catch the schrapnel (sp?) from the fuel can which exploded. I told him to hang in there and returned to the basement with the superinten-

I LIVE IN QUEENS CLOSE TO FLUSHING MEADOWS PARK IN A BASEMENT APARTMENT OVER THE YEARS I GOT TO KNOW THESE TWO BOYS KEVEN AND KENNETH THEY ARE BROTHERS WHO USED TO COME UP FROM FLORIDA IN THE SUMMER AND LIVED ON THE 3RD FLOOR THEY WERE BIG ON THE MODEL AIRPLANE FLYING WHICH INVOLVE MODEL AIRPLANE FUEL. THEY ENDED UP MOVING TO MY HOUSE AND GOING TO SCHOOL HERE FULL TIME. RIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, A FEW YEARS AGO, I RETURNED HOME FROM WORK AND THOUGHT NOTHING OF THE BOYS LAUGHING BEHIND THE CLOSED LAUNDRY ROOM DOOR. THEN I HEARD AN EXPLOSION AND SCREAMING CRIES FOR HELP. THEY HAD THE MODEL AIRPLANE FUEL IN A CLOSED ROOM (WITH A FURNACE) AND WERE PLAYING AROUND WITH A LIGHTER. THE OLDER BOY WAS ABLE TO GET A FIRE EXTINGUISHER BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO PUT OUT THE FIRE WE CARRIED THE YOUNGER BOY (HE GOT THE WORST OF IT) UP THE STAIRS AND LAID HIM DOWN UNTIL THE FIRE DEPT / EMS SHOWED UP. HE WAS A REAL TROOPER. I NEVER HEARD A SWEAR WORD FROM HIM ALTHOUGH HE HAD 3RD DEGREE BURNS OVER 90% OF HIS BODY. HE WAS LUCKY NOT TO CATCH THE ^{SCHRAPNEL} (SP?) FROM THE FUEL CAN WHICH EXPLODED I TOLD HIM TO HANG IN THERE AND RETURNED TO THE BASEMENT WITH THE SUPERINTENDANT AND PUT OUT THE FIRE WITH POTS AND PANS FROM MY KITCHEN SINK THE FIRE WAS WITHIN A FEW FEET ^{FROM} THE FURNACE I NEVER REALIZED THE EXTENT OF THE YOUNG BOY'S BURNS UNTIL RECENTLY WHEN MY BASEMENT FLOODED AND HE SHOWED UP TO HELP IN SLIP FLOPS AND SHORTS TO ME HE IS THE SUPERHERO.

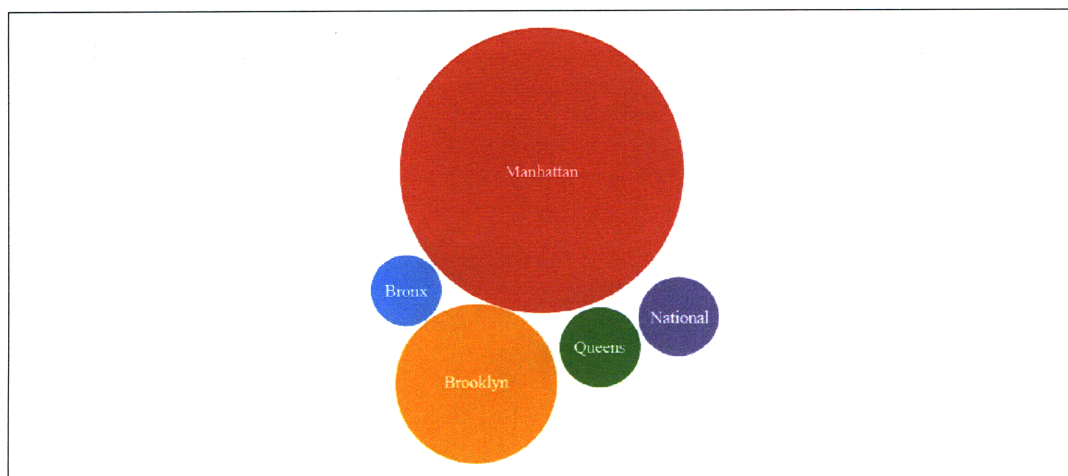
5-5 Written report located in a high crime rate area.

dant and put out the fire with pots and pans from my kitchen sink. The fire was within a few feet of the furnace. I never realized the extent of the young boy's burns until recently, when my basement flooded and he showed up to help in flip flops and shorts. To me he is the superhero.

Combined, *other* constituted 30% of total reports. While *other* typically referred to privately owned businesses and residential places, amassing further examples are needed in order to specify category patterns.

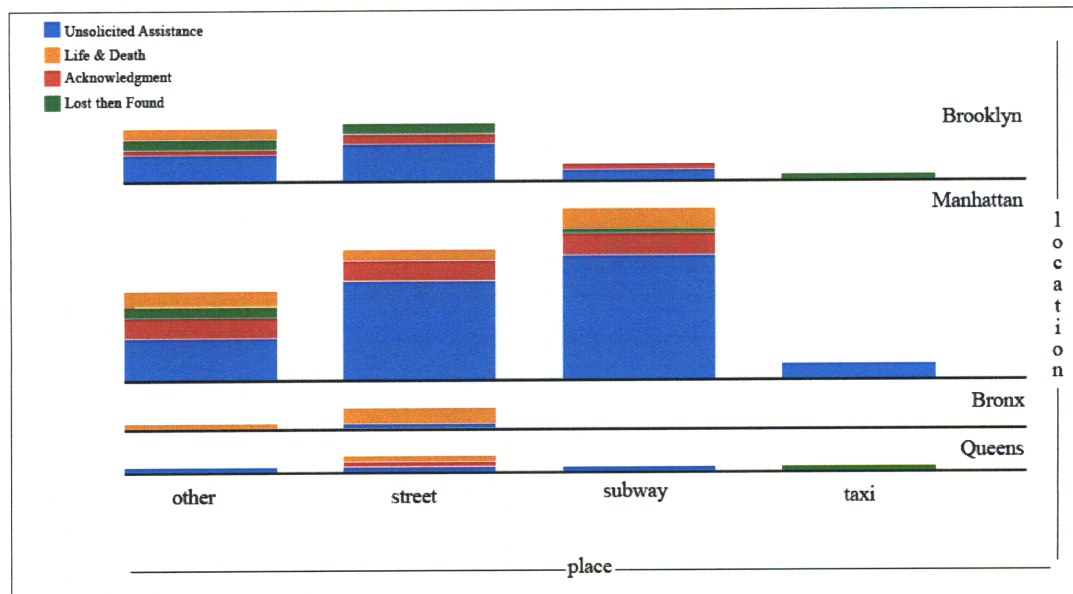
5.2.2 LOCATION ATTRIBUTES

As seen in the *place* discussion (Table 10-11), *location* attributes refer to the borough and neighborhood of a report. According to the latest Citizens Committee for New York City Neighborhood Quality of Life Survey (2008), city residents rate safety from crime as the single most important factor in determining the quality of a neighborhood. From a scale of 1 to 7, residents in Queens, Staten Island and Manhattan all rate their neighborhoods as safer than average, with scores of 4.8, 4.6 and 4.5 respectively. Brooklyn residents find their safety just below average, with a rating of 3.9, while Bronx residents feel the least safe with an average of 3.7.



T-11 Bubble chart of location attribute borough. Manhattan dominates Hero Report submission, while the Bronx and Queens have near equal reports.

In comparison, Table 11 demonstrates that Manhattan dominates hero report distribution with 63% of reports, followed by Brooklyn with 20%. Interestingly, the highest and the lowest boroughs in the resident safety survey, the Queens and Bronx respectively, had almost identical numbers of hero reports. When considered with borough population, the difference between self-reported safety and Hero Report submission

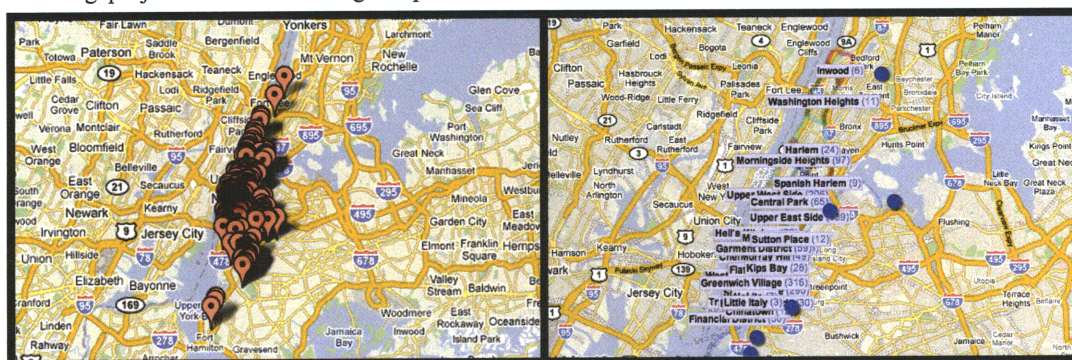


T-12 The category place location of hero reports

doubles. The Bronx ‘Hero Rate’ is almost twice as much Queens, and about half of Brooklyn’s.

The distribution of report *category*, across *place* and *location* attributes (Table 12), suggests other patterns relating to borough safety. The Bronx accounts for more *life & death* Hero Reports than Queens and Brooklyn combined. Unlike Manhattan, however, which has the largest number of such reports, these Bronx *life & death* incidents happen in the *street*. Manhattan’s *life & death* hero reports predominantly occurred in the subway. No transportation reports in the subway or taxi occur in the Bronx.

No report identified Staten Island as the *location* of incident. The borough’s absence speaks to a common pattern for New York City social networking projects. The technological presence of Manhattan and



5-6 Left: Venues with Beer Menus, NYC courtesy of Gothamist Gazette. Right: Neighborhoods of Overheard NY content, as categorized in Overplot.

Downtown Brooklyn dominate online discourse. Manhattan alone has one of the largest populations of bloggers in the country (Lin and Halavais, 2006). Brooklyn, with its influx of artists, students and higher income residents, also has a strong media presence. The registered number of blogs with NYC Bloggers (2008) illustrates the discrepancy: Manhattan: 3195, Brooklyn: 1903, Queens: 852, Bronx: 246, and Staten Island: 97. From beer menus (Beer Mapping 2008) to eavesdropping (Parparita 2006), online content for *New York City* usually translates into online content for Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn (Figure 6).



5-7 White New York City Subway. Source: Gawker

And, as the satirical subway map of Figure 7 illustrates, Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn are predominantly White neighborhoods (Seidell 2008).

In this context, the lack of reports from Staten Island is not surprising; however, Hero Reports is neither exclusively an online community nor a geographically filtered information resource. Its manifestations of radio and print support a dialog with communities not typically identified with online presence. Anticipating challenges for creating an on-line cross-borough dialog, an initial effort was made in contacting local newspapers in both the Bronx and Staten Island. While no collaborations happened in Staten Island, the Bronx paper, *The Riverdale Press*, forwarded relevant news by e-mail. Bronx reports include one of the only ones relating to assault against women:

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT: PUTTING ALL THE CRIMINALS ON NOTICE

Crime is all around us. What can we do? For William Anthony Rios, a 49th Precinct resident, the answer was simple. As a woman was being raped, Rios put a stop to the attack, saving the victim and essentially putting all criminals on notice with a message that crime will not be tolerated. While Rios did not discuss his actions, those around him labeled the Bronxite a hero.

“The streets belong to you and me, the law-abiding citizens,” said Councilman James Vacca. “When people see a crime taking place, they can do something about it.” We have many unsung heroes who do intervene and William Anthony Rios is a hero. This is what National Night Out is about “taking back our streets.”

Vacca awarded Rios with a citation that served not just to thank the Bronxite, but to let residents know that they, too, have the power to do something positive in their communities, whether it is save a victim or simply call 911.

5.3 THE DIALOG

Transformation is possible only through a collective dialog. As such, the feedback from early contributors provide a litmus test for Hero Reports. Comments of inspiration as well as concern are excerpted in the following three categories, *Interpreting Heroism*, *A Vision of New York* and *Concerns about Verification*.

5.3.1 INTERPRETING HEROISM

As noted earlier, the term ‘heroism’ connotes various meanings. While Hero Reports might frame heroism as the personal risk of civic engagement, others follow their own definitions. Hero Reports welcomes the inclusion of divergent interpretations; they speak to the complexity and lack of uniformity when considering heroism. The assumptions, challenges and expansions discussed below create a rich conversation around heroism.

Contributors’ assumptions regarding heroism are not without religious overtones, traditional role expectations, and self-congratulatory posturing. Following is a report submitted by a religious person whose prayer, he believes, saved a woman from homeless and heroin.

AN AMEN PEOPLE (A TESTIMONY)

I had just gotten off of an Amtrak train in Penn Station (Manhattan) and was on my way through Times Square to catch a subway train to my hostel, when I came across a woman who was sitting on a curb at 34th and Broadway. Now this woman appeared to be really sick, and it appeared to me that she was more than likely drug addicted, too. She sat on that curb in Manhattan and cried out and cried out for someone to help her, but everyone just passed her by.

Now it sometimes takes me a bit of time to acclimate when I arrive in NYC, and at the time that I saw this woman I felt as though I had not much to give her. I grieved a bit over this (what seemed to me to be my insufficiency and un-preparedness for the situation) and I then went over to her and just gave her a dollar and said "God bless you." This seemed to me to be really lame, but that was all that I could muster up at the time.

Well, as I walked away the Father began to speak to me. He said that He didn't want me to DO anything in this situation but that He wanted me to just pray. He then directed me in this way. He said ... "David, this lady is alone, she is homeless, and she is addicted to heroin. I want you to pray for her to get free from the drugs ... pray for her to get into a shelter ... and pray that she'll get into a church where there are believers who know Me and love Me and will love on her and teach her My ways." I prayed this then as I walked to the subway station to catch my train.

Now three weeks later I was in NYC again, and this time I was with a friend and we were on our way to Penn Station (at 34th St.) from Queens to catch a train home to Rochester. When the subway train that we were on stopped at 59th street though, the Holy Spirit told me to get off. Not knowing why we just obeyed. We got off the train and then climbed the stairs from the station up to street level at 59th.

Well, don't you know, there right at the top of the stairs was the woman who I had just met three weeks earlier at 34th and Broadway. I asked her if she was hungry and if she would like me to buy her something to eat. She said yes. So, we went to a corner store and I bought her some breakfast. Before she ate, and before we left her, I asked her if it might be alright if we all pray together. Again she said yes.

What struck me at the time was this woman seemed to have some deep intimacy with God while in prayer. So I asked her if she was a Christian and she said, "Let me tell you what has happened to me. Three weeks ago I had the most amazing encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ! Not only did He reveal Himself to me, but at that very same time I was delivered COLD TURKEY from heroin! I then was led by the Lord to Times Square Church, and they not only have helped me to get off the street, but I'm involved with a fellowship of believers who really seem to know and love God, and these people seem to really love me too! All this has happened to me over the course of the last three weeks!"

I just smiled and gave this lady a hug (with a few tears in my eyes). The Lord had answered my prayer for this woman exactly as I had been directed to pray. Through this the Lord taught me experientially that all-sufficiency is of Him, and that if we will just walk with HIM in true brokenness and humility, then we can simply hear the voice of the Father and then bear witness to HIS WILL. It is in this way that miracles happen. It is in this way that God's kingdom comes, God's will is done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. God is looking for an AMEN people. These are people whose lives simply bear witness to the will of the Father. We need to walk intimately with Him in order for this to happen though, and this intimacy only comes by way of the cross. Bless ya ... David

Meanwhile, some commentators find the project's aspirations to reclaim 'hero' second to the project's message of humanity. Challenges, then, toward the appropriateness of the term 'hero,' are not uncommon. The following two audio respondents highlight features of this argument:

These are stories of heroism? These are the stories of how people are supposed to be every day-helping a blind person on to the bus and helping a little old lady get her bag back. This is the only way human beings are supposed to treat each other. That guy who got on to that tracks and laid on top of the other guy so the train can roll around. That is actual heroism, in my opinion. Seeing somebody needing to onto the bus? That's being a human being and that's the way of most the New York residents ____ reputation I think. Anyway that's I may take it. --Recorded Audio, PRI/WNYC

"I really believe that we should encourage people to look out for each other. But I just, I get a little [worried] over the word hero especially since the way it's been dandied since 9/11. Because to me the hero myth, is a threat to democracy if really taken too seriously because it concentrates too much power into one person. You know the knight on the white horse will slay the dragon. We have to solve our problems as a community, not concentrate power into one person's hands. " --Recorded Audio, PRI/WNYC

Hero Reports's redefinition of heroism inspires expansion toward other cultural phenomenon. One contributor contextualized the endeavour

within the core mission of journalism. To illustrate the social roles—including hero—played in our news, he quotes Columbia Professor and Northwestern Dean, Jim Carey:

“What is arrayed before the reader is not pure information but a portrayal of the contending forces in the world. Moreover, as readers make their way through the paper, they engage in a continual shift of roles or of dramatic focus.... news is not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and it invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it.”

In an article about Hero Reports, Professor Henry Jenkins (2008) expands Hero Reports reclamation of heroism within the context of Mean World Syndrome. He writes:

In the research on media effects, one of the most fully developed findings is what is known as the “mean world syndrome.” Research finds that the average citizen grossly over-estimates how dangerous her neighborhood is because she reads the newspaper and assumes that the crime reports are actually a sample of the whole and thus amplifies them accordingly. In practice, a higher portion of violent crimes get reported than most people assume, although there are statistical biases as a result of the under-representation of crimes based on the race and class of the victims.

A larger problem is created by the over-representation of crime and the under-represented of everyday acts of kindness and generosity. The news often shows us people acting at their very worst without allowing us to see those moments where people help each other out. How might this under-reporting of good deeds also contribute to the mean world syndrome?

. . . Often, we see what we are looking for and our cultural biases literally color what we see. A campaign that invites us to look for suspicious behavior forces us to scrutinize our neighbors for signs and symptoms of terroristic activity. So, Wright wants us to reverse our lens and look for people who are doing things that are socially constructive. She wants us to find evidence of the good conduct that surrounds us all the time and bring it to greater public attention - She is . . . trying to flesh out a portrait of the ways that her fellow New Yorkers are making life better within their communities. “

Consensus around heroism’s definition remains elusive. But, by responding to, challenging and expanding its confines, authors created a conversation that inspired others, and themselves. As one reader writes: “it makes me think of doing some ‘civic heroism’ on my own part.”

5.3.2 A VISION OF NEW YORK

The value of mapping bridges of trust (i.e., everyday heroism) juxtaposed with the breaches (i.e., crime) is not restricted to New York. Indeed, the project is designed to grow in the hands of others. But, because of various factors, including New Yorkers’ deep tie to the “See Something, Say Something” campaign as well as my own personal affiliations, the initial framing of Hero Reports begins with New York.

The City serves as the start, not the end, of a journey.

Response to Hero Reports within the context of New York City varied. Emphasizing heroism's universality, some respondents warned against making the project "bound to New York." Others quickly responded to the "See Something, Say Something" specificity. Its mention helped explain the project during street interviews. And, as one suggests, "Emphasize See Something, Say Something. The Heroes Database is a way of using technology to measure something that right now is immeasurable and therefore subject to whatever interpretation is convenient to the authorities."

This dialog with authorities around a vision of New York City safety resonates with others. As Ellen Hume, Research Director for the MIT Center for Future Civic Media writes in the comments section: "[I] hope that when a critical mass of reports are aggregated on the Hero Reports map, it will be presented to the City of New York as another way of looking at their security: the security of connectedness and looking out for one another. 'See something, Say something'—positive."

A skeptic reiterated the personal significance of connectedness within New York City: "I was expecting the 'Hero Report' to be annoying; however it was pretty good. Maybe because I **do** do courageous things on the train and bus (from getting big hostile scary guys who are picking on women to back off to telling Suits to get up and give old people their seats). I enjoyed hearing that other people stand up for what's right, that they protect each other sometimes, and that the people who are protected remember it. Maybe they stand up for someone, then, in their turn. I hope."

An artist's collective that deconstructs the "See Something, Say Something" campaign, found its reinterpretation in Hero Reports reason for collaboration. "We create these conceptualized billboards to develop a dialogue about this 'see something' campaign which *we see* as essentially, a fear campaign. [We] have talked about expanding upon the vagueness of this phrase to include acts of kindness, so collaborating with your project seems like a natural continuation of our concept."

New York City's vulnerability in the face of terror colored some people's reactions. Indeed, one saw Hero Reports as destructive to the city's system of safety: "Not sure if you remember this but a few years

ago terrorists did in fact randomly slaughter a few thousand New Yorkers. The government program you object to so strongly was put into place to try to stop the next attack. . . it turns out that terrorists do in fact exist, they are trying to kill us. We need all the help we can get. You're not helping."

Another valued the reports, and their reflection onto the self, but not the "See Something, Say Something" framing. He writes:

"Perhaps with all the things wrong in the country that were precipitated by the war on terror (phone tapping, Iraq, torture, Geneva Convention violations, etc. etc.) that this seems like one of the least threatening parts of the war on terror.... there is not much in the [MTA] campaign itself that I find offensive or racist. . . . The ideas expressed by the mta campaign are interesting and I think this is a very valid way of exploring them. I enjoy seeing the reports I like being shown rather than told--that is, through reading the reports and through taking in the design (e.g. "CASE NUMBER2008-03-25 14:15.14" as an entry title) I get a sense that this exists in relation to the campaign, without having to read the manifesto. And the best part is that the content--in its unusualness--shows me something about the way I think. That is, when I notice something is unusual, I wonder why it is unusual, and it is usually because I had an assumption that I didn't know I had."

Taking the dialog outside of New York, one respondent hopes to extend the project into a pilot for developing nations. He writes, "we can enhance the 'Hero's Report' to a Social Networking 'Village Report.'"

5.3.3 CONCERNS ABOUT VERIFICATION

Questions regarding the veracity of Hero Reports content are common. As one commentator wrote: "How can you be sure you are not having your leg pulled?" Another noted the need for empirical data: "There's no way to validate these numbers. If you get reports about a crime you know the police respond and there's at least some sort of verification process . . . It doesn't seem like there's any way to verify or check up on this information. . . it would be nice to be able to get some sort of information that was verifiable or empirically validated."

These concerns are well founded and in many respects a central premise of Hero Reports. Instead of the stopping at the lack of empirical data and verification processes regarding heroism, Hero Reports poses questions in order to produce and maintain them. Hero Reports seeks quantifiable parameters of heroism. This search is a multi-step process with not all of the steps foreseeable. The present iteration of Hero Reports casts a broad net in order to collect a breadth of content. Amassing reports lays the necessary groundwork for structures of measurement and verification. Building these structures requires a recursive

process of creation and destruction over time. Abstracted, the process of formulizing behavior is not dissimilar to the development of our own penal system. As de Quervain, Fischbacher, Treyer, et al. (2004) point out: “For thousands of years, human societies did not have the modern institutions of law and enforcement—impartial police and judges that ensure the punishment of norm violations.”

Developing systems of economic exchange (e.g., X heroic action translates to this Y reward, or X heroic action is more important than Y heroic action) suggests one way of quantifying Hero Reports content. Other suggestions include a ranking system, where news accounts and corroborated reports weigh higher than individual self-reports. The inclusion of additional media—audio, image and video—can also factor into a report’s reliability ranking.

More performative verification systems can mirror contemporary emergency response. Hero Fighters could respond to a hero report in progress, or Hero Detectives could investigate the truth of a reported heroic exchange. Regardless of the system developed, only collective action and complementary structures will ensure report reliability.

5.4 THE NETWORK

To support a diversity of perspectives, Hero Reports development requires a correspondingly diverse network of contributors. This section outlines some of the distribution techniques used for targeting specific communities, as well as resulting collaborations. Communities discussed are organized into three categories, *News Outlets*, *Documentarians*, and the *Public Good*.

5.4.1 NEWS OUTLETS

The primary technique for contacting news outlets is cold e-mailing. These e-mails consist of a sample hero report drawn from the news archives as well as a press release. Approximately 200 news outlets were contacted in this manner. The audience of these news outlets ranged from an international to a local penetration. Collaboration with news outlets takes two non-exclusive forms—press coverage and content coordination. An invaluable part of the Hero Report network, press coverage constitutes the majority of news collaborations. Here an article about the Hero Reports system extends the audience and invariably the community of contributors.

The second form of collaboration coordinates hero content over time. While more difficult to establish, such content coordination offers means for sustainability and growth. Here news outlets forward relevant stories, as they occur, to the Hero Reports' network. In turn, Hero Reports maps and contextualizes these 'hero in the news' incidents. Within the hero network, these discrete 'good news' articles, connect to a larger cultural framework.

The hyper local news of sites such as EveryBlock, outside:in and ourCity (as discussed in the *Relevant Works* chapter) seemingly parallel the content coordination of Hero Reports. All attempt to aggregate third party content for geographic filtering. However, the thematic and subjective nature of hero news (at least in current iteration) suggests different aggregation techniques. Hero Reports brokers symbiotic agreements between persons rather than building effective web crawlers. The ideal Hero Reports aggregator would combine approaches—personal agreement alongside web crawling. Recent affiliations with two hyper-local news aggregators—EveryBlock and Povo—offer some momentum towards this ideal. Many see the symbiosis of such a news collaboration. As one speaker asked during a civic media conference at MIT: "Why

not mash Hero Reports with EveryBlock?” (Jeremy Liu, recorded by Miel 2008).

A collaboration with WNYC’s *The Take Away* provides Hero Reports with regular access to a large audience. Procurement and distribution of reports occur on-air through radio segments, as well as online through an embedded widget. While a national broadcast, *The Take Away*’s New York City studio ensures that WNYC journalists understand the “See Something, Say Something” context. Correspondingly, a number of *The Take Away* reporters collect video reports, follow-up on existing hero submissions and contribute their own hero stories. Co-anchor, John Hockenberry shared the following story:

When you’re on a subway you’re sitting there, in your own thing, your in your own thing, your in your own world, your own book, your own newspaper. Well I was on this subway. We’re stopped at a station. The doors were closing. There were a number of people there. A woman had left the car. Again, I wasn’t really paying attention. On the bench of one of these seats was this an abandoned bag. Remember. Like a backpack. It was a little spooky. You know. An abandoned bag. It didn’t look good.

Now, the doors were shut. But we weren’t moving yet. Suddenly, this woman appears at the door, and starts pounding. And I look at her and I say, “what’s the problem? Just wait for the next car. What is your problem?” She keeps pounding though. And this older lady about the middle of the car. Points to the abandoned bag sitting on the bench. And says, “it’s her bag!”

Right! She’d gotten off the car. She’d forgotten her bag. She was going to leave her bag. And all of a sudden this young bearded kind of Ethan Hawke looking guy sitting there eating Indian food in the middle of the car, suddenly is paying attention now. He’s right next to the bag. He stands up, he looks at the woman and starts motioning like, he wants to meet her at the next station. But the message is kind of unclear. He’s gesticulating.

All this is happening in seconds. And the car’s now starting to move, see. The Ethan Hawke’s guy solution was something like, “I’ll e-mail you! OK?!” You know, we’re starting to move. This was clearly not going to work. We’re picking up speed. The woman’s getting frantic, I mean, this is a big bag. Everything in her life seems to be in this bag.

Then all of a sudden, these two guy at the other end of the car, wearing headphones. They’re kind of hip hop guys. You know, talking loud. Ignoring everybody in the car. They look around. They’re paying attention now. “We got it!” They said. And one of the guys, runs over to the bag. This is the amazing part. He picks up the bag. The other guy runs to the end of the car, opens the door and walks through. Between the two cars. There’s that space.

Now the woman, is running down the platform after our car. She’s watching her bag being manhandled by these hip hop guys. Right? All at once, the dude in the middle of the car, tosses the bag across the car, all the way across the car, through the door. And the other guy catches it between the two cars and at the last absolute minute, last possible second, he pitches it onto the platform. Just as we enter the tunnel.

The bag landed right next to the lady. She grabs it. Through the window, we can see her jumping up and down. And the woman is hugging her bag, everyone on our car is cheering. The subway car is electric. People are screaming.

They're jumping up and down. We enter the tunnel and we continue on our way. And by the time we get to the next station, everyone's sitting back in the car, back in their book. Silent. Absolutely silent.

But you know what? It couldn't have happened if all those heroes weren't on that car. Right? It couldn't have happened without the old lady noticing that the bag belonged to the lady who was pounding on the door. It couldn't have happened without Ethan Hawke standing up and doing all this gesticulating. And the hip hop dudes. Of course, they were the biggest heroes of all, right?

And you know, when you're in a subway car in new York, when you're in a lot of places around the country, you feel like maybe these people aren't going to protect me. In that subway car, I was so safe, if anything would happen, we all would have been fine. That's my hero report. I saw something. And now I just said something.



5-8 Auggie (Harvey Keitel) photographs the same scene at the same time every morning in *Smoke* 2003. Source: Screenshot Bladery/YouTube.

An invaluable node in the network, liaisons with neighborhood news have presented as persistent challenges. Most cold e-mails to neighborhood news outlets go unanswered and more prove temporary affiliations. Current collaborators include *The Brooklyn Press* and the Bronx's *Riverdale News*. Meanwhile, larger publications like *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York* expressed initial interest but have yet to yield substantial collaboration. This unpredictable ride with news outlets provides lessons for gauging the public *saleability* of Hero Reports. In other words, which aspects are news worthy?


5.4.2 DOCUMENTARIANS

The documentarian aligns with Josef Albers' vision the artist as a visual articulation of what IS; for observation, and not self-expression, lay at the heart of good art. As he wrote in *Search versus Re-Search* (1969): "It is justifiable to say that art is the visual formulation of our inner response to the world, to the universe and to life . . . Art is not self-expression, but observation and articulation." The active and natural contribution of the documentarian speaks to a confluence of observation and creation. From artists to bloggers, documentarians are seeing something and making something in response.

An unexpected, but in retrospect natural, community for the Hero Reports network is this documentarian. Long before Hero Reports, these individuals have been watching and recording their New York City street life. Such documentarians not only offer a range of perspectives but with the use of photography, video, blogs and text-messaging, they offer a range of hero medium.

Similar to the cold e-mailing of news outlets, documentarians were

contacted through e-mail with sourced content (e.g., blog entry, photograph) in the form of a Hero Reports' submission. Approximately twenty bloggers were contacted in this manner. A review of one significant documentarian follows.



DIRECTIONS WITH HINDSIGHT

CASE NUMBER 2008-08-12 10:56:24

A blind couple walking with blind-canes stepped out of the train. They were looking to get out of the subway station and onto the street. A nice gentleman was trying to point them in the right direction, but then realized it would just be easier to lead them to the exit. These people are so brave - a big city can be scary when one does have one's eye sight - I can't even imagine how one manages when one can't see. I admire these people's resolve

5-9 Featured report by The Saw Lady.

Natalia Paruz, otherwise known as the Saw Lady, authors the only public blog by a New York City subway musician. Reminiscent of the character Auggie (Harvey Keitel) in *Smoke*, who photographs the same city corner at the same time for decades (Figure 8), the Saw Lady's small vignettes provide a stillness amidst the chaos of subway life. The rhythms of vendors, musicians, transit employees, homeless and commuters mingle in her observations of the everyday routine. While the Saw Lady's musings did not begin as hero reports, her recordings of simple moments inevitably captures everyday acts of heroism. Even before establishing a more structured collaboration, the Saw Lady blog provided Hero Reports with hero content ranging from the seemingly insignificance of helping a blind couple (Figure 9) to the gravity of forgiveness in the wake of a hate crime.

The symbiotic relationship between the Saw Lady and Hero Reports opened access to a community not typically associated with online content—subway musicians. The Saw Lady guided a handful of recorded interviews with subway musicians.

5.4.3 GOOD CHANGE

Specific communities of educators, activists and public leaders gravitate toward the idealism of Hero Reports. Educators interested in teaching civic responsibility, tolerance and social action to young people aligned

with much of Hero Reports' mission. Two educational organizations, in particular—*Press Pass TV* and *Facing History and Ourselves*—became early members of the Hero Reports community. As their slogan reads (2007), Press Pass TV works with Boston students to create civic minded video journalism, “by any media necessary.” From shooting and editing video, to scheduling and conducting interviews, student produce all aspects of local news that makes a positive difference to the community. Content is featured on local access cable, on the internet, at public screenings and in classrooms. Come Fall 2008, Boston student will collect some of the first video Hero Reports. As one Press Pass TV collaborator said, “You really have something great going.”

This neighborhood and student-driven collaboration of *Press Pass TV* differs from the national initiatives of *Facing History and Ourselves*. Providing classroom strategies, resources and lessons that inspire young people to take responsibility for their world, *Facing History and Ourselves* support children as agents of change. Another Fall collaboration, *Facing History and Ourselves* will include a Hero Reports submission form on their web site.

Activist communities for profound positive change became natural communities in the Hero Reports network. *Worldchanging* is a solutions-based online magazine that is premised on the belief that the tools for building a better future exist all around us. Fragmentation, not lack of tools, accounts for the challenges of creating this better world.. As the *Worldchanging* (2007) mission says, “Another world is not just possible, it’s here. We only need to put the pieces together.” A *Worldchanging* article about Hero Reports isolates the parallels of mission.

Hero reporting isn’t far off from the founding principle of Worldchanging. We’re bringing solutions for global sustainability to the foreground in the hopes of connecting the dots to inspire a positive outlook. It isn’t because we prefer to pretend that all is right in the world. Rather, it’s because we believe that when we view the world optimistically, we are better equipped to fix what is broken, and to build the world we wish to live in.

Readers also seemed to align with the possibilities of the Hero Map. As one commented, “By mapping these random acts of courage and kindness, we might find that they are not so random after all!”

Finally, collaborations with community leaders in the city of Boston as well as the American Association of Retired People (AARP) continue to develop.

6. CONCLUSION

Hero Reports extends the rationale of New York City's "See Something, Say Something" campaign—an alert public can be a good security measure. The current political climate within the United States translates the MTA's tactics into ones of fear. Instead of fostering collective security, these calls for vigilance create rifts between people and communities. An unhealthy impact of the "See Something, Say Something" campaign encourages people to look at each other with heightened and prejudicial suspicion.

Although other projects have sought to interrogate the tactics of such citizen-detective campaigns, they do not provide productive alternatives. Because of this, projects seeking to deflect fear, only serve to reify and preserve its power. An alternative technology is needed to effectively destabilize the message of fear inherent in the MTA campaign. Hero Reports counterbalances the vigilance associated with suspicion and Othering with measures of positive and contextual alertness. It is a technology that builds communities that are truly, and collectively, empowering.

Hero Reports provides this alternative first by aggregating stories of everyday heroism, and then by thematically, geographically and temporally mapping them. By linking and contextualizing discrete moments of heroism, Hero Reports promotes a public discourse about how we create, enforce and value social norms. Balancing the empirical ways we measure crime, Hero Reports provides the groundwork for determining the empirical parameters for heroism.

Unlike other attempts to value heroism, Hero Reports does not exclusively define hero in terms of sacrifice, but rather in terms of the risk associated with getting involved. The small, fragmented opportunities for civic engagement one encounters, often in transit and amid strangers. And, unlike current online initiatives that promote local dialog through geographically filtered news aggregation, Hero Reports creates dialog through technological and network multiplicity. As both a social network as well as platform agnostic tool, Hero Reports brings together different demographics into a shared dialog around community well being. Through heterogeneous medium—web, radio, letter, interview and phone call—people share stories of civic courage, selflessness and cour-

tesy they have witnessed or experienced. These first person accounts combine with news media to inform a hero database. The mapping of this data gives the heroic moment a collective memory, which in turns gives Hero Reports political and economic weight.

Results indicate that routine transitional spaces of city life account for most hero reports. Surprisingly, both high crime neighborhoods as well as stigmatized professions are often sited in incident descriptions. The significance of reinterpreting these neighborhoods and demographics lays the foundation for future work.

The results presented in this thesis not only provide important empirical information for the positive modeling of social norms, but also offer a theoretical contribution for the positioning technological research. Instead of problem-solving negative symptoms of New York City's security initiatives, Hero Reports analyzes the systems that produce and sustain city safety. Findings indicate that New York City constructs security through disciplinary technologies where dispersed powers of the gaze isolate citizens in visibility. Citizen-detectives circulate through a net-like city of mistrust as vehicles of creation and enforcement.

Hero Reports intervenes in this negative conception of power. Mirroring disciplinary methodologies where data constitutes truth, Hero Reports attempts to isolate measurable parameters of heroism in order to shift collective dialog and memory. In this way, Hero Reports situates technologists as active agents in civic discourse. Such integrity of creation extends beyond the bounds of New York City to offer a reconstitution of the Self and our relation and responsibility to the Other.

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